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170

Cab 63/160

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**References:**

CAB 63 / 160

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UNTIL**

1971



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THE SCANDINAVIAN SITUATION.  
The possible use of force.

In considering the question of whether the refusal of Sweden and Norway to comply with our desire to send Regular Allied Forces through their ports and railways to Finland is to be met by an attempt to force our way through, the first question that arises is - "Is it practicable?".

2. We might perhaps assume that our troops would not actually be fired on, whether at Narvik or Trondhjem. Otherwise the whole character and organisation of the expedition would have to be changed. But is that assumption enough? The expedition has, I understand, been planned on the assumption of willing co-operation by the Norwegians and Swedes in the ports and on the railways. Can the forces be got through and maintained without such co-operation? Probably the landing facilities at the ports and the railways depend upon electrical installations. In the case of Narvik these are understood to be at Gallivare. Nothing is easier than to switch off a current or, for the matter of that, for a skilled man to put a power-plant out of action. The Narvik railway, and probably the Trondhjem railway, is highly vulnerable - as all electric railways are. Even if there were no Scandinavian saboteurs, or workers who could be bribed, there are probably plenty of Germans to do the job. And, apart from that, is it likely that two Governments that had refused our appeal would co-operate to the extent of putting at

1	2	3	4	5	6
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CONTINUED ON THE NEXT RECORD OFFICE, LONDON

Ref: 63/160

CAB 63 / 160



our disposal the resources of their railways in men and material, involving presumably the concentration of a large amount of rolling stock and the dislocation of the economic system of the country?

3. Unless we can count on such facilities being freely given the expedition may result in a humiliating retreat and great loss of prestige.

4. The next point is to examine the pros and cons of the proposed operation, in order to decide how much risk it is worth while to take.

#### Possible Advantages.

5. The following advantages might be secured, provided that the operations are successful:-

- (1) To bring help to Finland and enable her to hold out longer.
- (2) This will serve to exhaust Russia and to strain both her resources and her transport, so that she will be unable to give much material assistance of any kind to Germany. It will also, in all probability, keep the war out of the Balkans. These are very great advantages from the point of view of limiting German oil supplies - possibly her Achilles Heel.
- (3) Germany, deprived of Russian resources, will also lose the Gallivare and other iron ore she receives at present from Sweden, as well as metals and fish from Norway, to the great advantage of our blockade.
- (4) Our blockade will be further strengthened by the fact that Norwegian territorial waters will no longer be available to German merchant shipping or to neutrals carrying supplies to Germany.
- (5) It may be possible to use ports such as Christiansand and Oslo to secure the naval control of the Skager Rak, provided we can support our naval forces by air.
- (6) From Scandinavian aerodromes it might be possible later, if not at present, seriously to threaten German ports in the Baltic and the Kiel Canal. If we dare to adopt an offensive rôle we might even bottle up the Baltic.

1
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3
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5
6

Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**  
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- 5
- (1) The arrival of Allied Regular Forces (as distinct from volunteers) in Finland will provide the U.S.S.R. with a pretext to engage in hostilities with the British Empire all over Asia, which will vastly extend the scope and range of the war.

(To compensate this it may lead to a more friendly attitude on Italy's part).

- (11) Another result may be to bring Germany and Russia into more cordial relations, and Germany may help Russia against Finland. On a long view, the greatest danger the Allies have to face is the exploitation of Russian resources by German brains, which, eventually, will break our blockade. It is probable, however, that in course of time the thieves would fall out as they did in April, 1912, nearly five years after the Treaty of Tilsit, when Russia joined the Coalition. Even so, however, Russia in the interval might do us a lot of harm in Iran, Afghanistan, India and the Far East and by putting her fleet, including her submarines, in the Baltic, the White Sea, the Black Sea, and the Far East at Germany's disposal.

- (111) The forces with which we can reinforce Finland, Sweden and Norway are altogether insufficient, in combination with their own forces, to save them from a most frightful hammering, especially in the air - unless we are prepared to run risks at home that, so far, no member of the War Cabinet has been willing to face.

- (iv) If we have forced Sweden and Norway into this terrible position against their will, our moral position in the world will be weakened. This result will not really be affected by the fact that the ostensible reason for our action is to bring help to Finland, especially when the meagreness of the Allied Force, and the limitations under which it operates, became known. The Swedes and Norwegians will declare that the whole plan is a cynical camouflage to enable the Allies to get their hold on the Gallivare mine-fields and the Norwegian territorial waters. They will add that they had no reason to fear ~~that~~ either Russia or Germany, but for us. Russia had had enough fighting in Finland. And Germany would obtain all she could hope to get in Sweden without fighting for it. In the U.S.A. our action will be contrasted unfavourably with the last war, and the following statements by Grey to House on February 13th, 1915, will be recalled:-

"He did not think it fair to Greece to let her come into the war without some protection".

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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X The Intimate  
Papers of  
Colonel House,  
Vol.I, page 379.

6

"He said they had never tried to influence Holland to come into the war, for they had never been able to send sufficient troops there to protect her from an invasion in the event she declared war on Germany".

(v) We are not in a position to supply even Finland, much less Sweden and Norway, with their indispensable needs in armaments, (including a.a. guns), ammunition and aircraft. Their own resources are totally inadequate in this respect, and will probably soon be bombed out of existence. That is an aspect of the question which we have not really faced.

8. Unless the latter disadvantage can be overcome, I fear it is decisive against the proposal to meet by force a refusal by Norway and Sweden to allow a free passage of troops to Finland. The fact is that we are not yet ready for a diversion on this scale.

9. The course I would advocate would be to send to the Finns the equivalent of the weapons and munitions that we had contemplated sending to Finland, and a proportion of what we should have sent to Norway and Sweden. We should also intensify efforts to obtain a continuous stream of international volunteers. It is true that this course would not give us all the theoretical advantages of the major operation, and particularly we should not occupy the Gallivare region. But we should obtain very considerable advantages by prolonging the Finnish resistance, and we should avoid the risk of a possible, if not probable, disaster to Norway and Sweden owing to inadequate supply, and a very damaging loss of our moral advantage.

4th March, 1940.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAP 63 / 160

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COPY OF NOTES GIVEN TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

*Scandinavia* *Attache* 7  
*File*

**PERSONAL &  
MOST SECRET.**

4th March, 1940.

I enclose for your personal information a copy of some notes on the question of whether we should try and force a way through Norway and Sweden, which I wrote to clear my own mind yesterday.

I gave a copy to the Prime Minister after the Cabinet this morning. No-one else has seen them.

You will see that I come to the conclusion that instead of sending a small Allied Force to be used only in the north of Finland, it would be better to send the equivalent in armaments which could be used at the decisive point on the Isthmus. I believe it would be worth while to earmark some small percentage of our monthly output to sustain the Finns, and to get the French to do the same. I told the P.M. that if it would be useful at any time, I would be prepared to circulate something on these lines or to say it, but I thought to-day that wiser counsels were tending to prevail.

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

**CAB 63 / 160**

**THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Temporary Headquarters:

**BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD**

Telephone: Oxford 47471

Date 24th March, 1940

From THE RUSSIAN SECTION

To MR. CLEMENT JONES.

SUBJECT Note on Sir John Moore's Expedition to

Sweden in 1808 (Two copies)



SIR JOHN MOORE'S EXPEDITION TO SWEDEN IN 1808

(Note: A very clear and detailed account of Sir John Moore's visit to Sweden in 1808, with reference to his diary and to state documents, is to be found in the Hon. J.W. Fortescue's History of the British Army, Vol.6, Book 13, Chapter 17, pp.122-37. Another account which is in full agreement with the above is in the Life of Sir John Moore, by his brother James Carrick Moore, Vol. 2, Chapter 14, pp.76-96. There is also the diary of Sir John Moore, Vol.2, Chapter 25, pp.203-231.)

There is little to be said about this incident, and in any case it has practically no bearing on events in Finland in 1808. Sir John Moore had been employed in a series of expeditions with small forces in Egypt, Sicily, and for a moment in Portugal, and was sent to Sweden on May 10th, 1808. One may connect this enterprise with the expedition which was designed in the spring of 1807 to save Stralsund and Danzig from capture by Napoleon after the battle of Eylau (17th February, 1807) and before that of Friedland (14th June), which was followed by the Russo-French armistice of June 21st and the meeting between Napoleon and Alexander I at Tilsit on June 25th. This expedition, in which Moore had no part, entirely miscarried, and this among other reasons was given by Alexander to Napoleon at Tilsit as a cause of his great dissatisfaction with delusive offers of British help.

After Tilsit, following protracted negotiations which were complicated by the complete lack of balance of the Swedish sovereign, King Gustavus, Adolphus III, Moore was sent from England with a force of 12,000 men to Göteborg. His instructions were to act along the coast, where he had the support of Admiral Saumarez with eleven ships of the line and smaller vessels; but the Swedish sovereign throughout not only forbade him to land, but claimed the chief command, and intended to use him for an attack on either Zealand or Norway, under conditions which only too obviously made any such enterprise hopeless. To start with, while these negotiations were in process, Moore's troops were moved close to the English ports of departure, and he had a sharp correspondence with the War Minister, Lord Castlereagh, as

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**

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to the small size and excessive number of the transporting vessels.

Sailing on May 10th from Yarmouth, and being delayed three days by fog, he reached Göteborg on May 17th, where he was not allowed to land his troops. The original agreement gave him the right to withdraw the expedition at his own discretion after giving due notice. There followed a protracted altercation between Moore and King Gustavus, in which the behaviour of the king, on the evidence given, can only be described as quite inconsequent and irrational, though Gustavus insisted throughout on his main demands that the troops should not land in Sweden, that he should himself have the chief command, and that the British force should be employed outside Sweden wherever he should choose to send it. Moore could in no way agree to these terms without disobedience to his instructions, though these were vaguely cast, and he had to refer to London through Colonel Murray, the Q.M.G. of the force, who returned from London on June 12th. Moore himself went straight to Stockholm, where he saw the King on June 17th, 18th, 20th and 23rd - on the last occasion being brought almost to lose his temper by the King's suggestions of deceit or even of open falsehood. The King himself changed his mind with regard to the suggestion of a British raid on Norway, which Moore was prepared to submit to the consideration of the Cabinet.

On June 17th the King had suggested that the British expedition should attempt a landing in Viborg; the Russians had already invaded Finland and the Swedish Army had retired as far north as Uleaborg; the vital fortress of Sveaborg had been treacherously surrendered on May 3rd, and Moore had to represent that the British force could only be surrounded and taken prisoner. He at first gave the impression that it was possible to refer this question to his Government, but on closer examination of his instructions next day decided that he could not do so and communicated his view to Stockholm. After the final talk between Moore and the King on June 23rd and the

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7
8
9
10

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Reference - CAB 63 / 160



communication of Moore's refusal to go to Finland, the King ordered his arrest, and he was only able to escape in peasant disguise on June 29th to rejoin Admiral Saumarez on H.M.S. Victoria. The expedition sailed for England on July 3rd and reached the Downs on July 15th.

It will be clear from this account that Moore never landed his troops and that they did not ever fight. This narrative will also explain why they came away.

9th March, 1940.

Chatham House,  
Balliol College,  
Oxford.

1
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3
4
5
6

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CAB 63 / 160

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12  
11th March, 1940.

My dear Toynbee,

I want to thank you for the admirable note on Sir John Moore's expedition to Sweden in 1808, which contains some information which I was anxious to obtain and which was not to be found in any of the general or military histories in my library.

I hope I have not caused your people too much trouble in asking for it.

As you are probably aware, it is by no means the first time that I have received assistance from the Royal Institute since the beginning of the war.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) HANKEY.

Professor A.J. Toynbee, D.Litt., F.B.A.,  
The Royal Institute of International Affairs,  
Balliol College,  
Oxford.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

REFERENCE  
CAB 63 / 160

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11th March, 1940.

At the discussion on Finland at the Cabinet this morning I had to consider whether I should develop the arguments contained in the note I sent you on the 4th March setting forth the pros and cons of forcible action in Norway and Sweden in connection with our plans to assist Finland.

On the whole, however, I came to the conclusion that the following new factors in the situation rendered it undesirable that I should do so:-

- (1) It is tremendously important to give the Finns all the support we can. The line we decided on this morning may make the difference between a durable and an unendurable peace. It should enable the Finns to adopt a much stiffer attitude in their negotiations.
- (2) Although from our own point of view I should prefer to send war material rather than actual military forces to Finland, in present circumstances an announcement limited to this would not, in my opinion, produce sufficient moral effect either on the Finns, or on the British, French or Scandinavian peoples, or on the world at large. (including Russia).

(3)

**The Rt. Hon. Viscount Halifax, K.G.**



- 114
- (3) There is a good deal of indirect evidence to show that the Germans are working in favour of peace between Russia and Finland and detest the idea of an extension of the war to Scandinavia. This is an argument in favour of such an extension.
  - (4) The figures you gave to the Cabinet on Saturday and again to-day about the amount of iron ore brought from Narvik to Germany enhance the importance of anything we can do to stop or delay the export of ore from Lulea when the Gulf of Bothnia thaws.
  - (5) A preliminary draft I read during the week-end of a new report by Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd's expert committee on the German oil position indicates that in respect of oil in general, and lubricating, gas and diesel oils in particular, their position is probably precarious. That might deter the Germans from a Scandinavian expedition, or, if they were to undertake it, from simultaneous military offensive action anywhere else.
  - (6) Pressure of the French Government - though this influences me less than others because in the last war I can never remember a difference arising between the two Governments in which the French did not make this particular appeal. It is just part of their ordinary technique for putting pressure on a friend.

On the whole, however, these considerations seem to me to tilt the balance (always rather an even one) between the courses open to us.

Even so, I am conscious of the disadvantage of the step towards which we are moving, and I should not be at all

sorry

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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sorry if the Finns were to appeal for material help rather than for personnel. Whatever the nature of their appeal I am quite certain that if the war <sup>in Finland</sup> goes on we shall have to give more material help.

[illegible]



QUESTION.

To ask the Prime Minister whether, in the event of the Finnish Government being unwilling to accept the Soviet terms and appealing for <sup>further</sup> help to the British and French Governments, <sup>his Government</sup> the latter would be prepared to <sup>itself</sup> meet their appeal.

ANSWER.

*will and are continuing to send*

As the House will be aware, both the French and British Governments have been sending material assistance to Finland, <sup>which</sup> <sup>already</sup> has been of considerable value to the Finnish Government.

*have already informed the Finnish Government that they and the French Government*

In the circumstances contemplated in the Rt. Hon. gentleman's question His Majesty's Government and the French Government are <sup>prepared</sup> <sup>to move</sup> <sup>to give</sup> immediately and jointly, further <sup>assistance</sup> help to Finland, using all available resources at their disposal.

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3
4
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7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20

Reference: CAP 63 / 160





SECRET

DOMINIONS OFFICE,

DOWNING STREET, S.W.1.

10th April, 1940.

*My dear Maurice,*

During our High Commissioners' meeting this morning Massey raised the question as to whether we were taking any steps to sabotage the railways in Norway. It was suggested that a few determined ~~men~~ <sup>men</sup> might yet be able to do much to make difficulties for the Germans in this respect, failing which it might be possible to take action by air. I replied that I did not know whether any plans had been laid in advance for such a contingency but that I would enquire and let them know at our next meeting.

Please forgive me <sup>for</sup> troubling you with this, but perhaps you could let me know orally at tomorrow's Cabinet whether there is anything that I can usefully tell the High Commissioners.

*Yours  
Anthony Eden*

The Right Honourable  
Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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**MOST SECRET.**

11th April, 1940.

(Norwegian)

No pre-war/plans have been made for the sabotage of Norwegian railways. It would be very dangerous for us to carry this out as we do not know the Norwegian plans. They may wish to use the railways themselves in their retirement, or to concentrate forces collected from the interior against the invaders at the ports.

It is up to their General Staff to carry out sabotage to meet the requirements of the military situation. They are known to have mined the railway from Narvik to Galivare, and one would suppose that a General Staff even of the Norwegian calibre would have some plans for other railways too.

You may remember that at the Cabinet yesterday I suggested that the subject of sabotage on the Norwegian railways ought to be tackled by the Chiefs of Staff Committee, and it was recorded in the minutes. I expect they will be doing so.

**The Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, M.C., M.P.**

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Reference:-

**CAB 63 / 160**



19

1	2	3	4	5	6
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**Primo**



Prime Minister and issued to each Chief of the Staff - a provision inspired by and indeed pressed strongly by Mr. Churchill.

The operations we are about to embark on are essentially in the nature of conjoint operations. It is not enough that the Chiefs of Staff should have been present with Ministers and agreed to proposals. Ministers in the Military Co-ordination Committee may have obtained their individual views but this is not necessarily the same as their collective view. As one who has sat in Committees attended both by the Chiefs of Staff and by Ministers, as well as meetings of the Chiefs of Staff alone ever since their inception, I know well that when meeting alone they get down to "hard tacks" better than when they meet with Ministers. In addition, it gives them the opportunity to have the plans worked out in detail by the Joint Planning Organisation.

Up to now we have taken no decision in the military field without obtaining the opinion of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, who have usually had their details worked out by the Joint Planning Committee.

The decisions now before us are of such importance to the future of the war that we cannot afford to omit this safeguard.

It is all the more important because an attack on coast fortifications and a landing in a foreign country are probably the most difficult kind of operation that can be undertaken. Attacks of coast forts have scarcely ever succeeded unless either there was treachery within (as apparently at Oslø) or overwhelming force available (as at Alexandria).

Lord Salisbury will have a sharp eye on the question of procedure, and if anything goes wrong will undoubtedly press the point. So will Lord Trenchard,<sup>x</sup> Lord Cavan and Lord Milne,<sup>x</sup> all of whom know exactly what the modern constitutional procedure has been.

<sup>x</sup> Former Chairmen of C.O.S. Sub-Committee.

1
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4
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It is for these reasons that I submit that, unless it has been done already (which I do not think it has), the War Cabinet should have on record the collective view of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee on the operations.

I am, of course, fully conscious that man was not made for the machine but the machine for man. If this particular machine does not meet the exigencies of war we should scrap it, but up to now it has proved so useful a piece of machinery for focusing the combined views of all three General Staffs and of all sections of those Staffs that we should be very cautious about changing it.

17th April, 1940.

1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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*Copy for Comden*

*[unpublished] 22*

**TOP SECRET.**

Not a very good moment to make a statement.

What can be said has for the most part been published or has appeared in Cabinet Minutes.

At the most interesting point I shall have to break off, because one simply cannot speak of impending operations even in this select company.

My own practice in last war

[Manuscript Minutes.]

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

Reference:-

**CAB 63 / 160**

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23

But will try and tell a connected  
story - showing that from the outset  
we have had a perfectly clear policy  
which we are engaged in trying  
to carry out.

You will remember that

1	2	3	4	5	6
1				2	

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160



24

Air reconnaissance <sup>had</sup> revealed one or two groups of enemy ships including the Gneisenau, <sup>and</sup> another big cruiser <sup>and two smaller ones</sup>. These <sup>by R.A.F.</sup> were bombed. No hits, near misses.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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CA 63 / 160



25  
Naval dispositions taken to intercept  
them.

*(Thus it happened that)*

A cruiser squadron which was embarking  
troops for Narvik in case <sup>they were</sup> required, re-  
landed them at ~~a port~~ <sup>the Firth</sup> and sailed to  
join the main fleet.

The <sup>main</sup> only result of the Naval dispositions  
was the RENOWN'S short action with  
Scharnhorst and another cruiser on the  
next day, Tuesday, 9th April.

*But, as soon as we learned of the German seizure of ports the*  
Tuesday, 9th April. *Admiralty with first dispatch*

Monsieur Reynaud and Daladier arrived in  
London. General policy of Allies  
decided on, namely, -

Strong forces to be sent to ports in  
Norway with a view to their re-capture  
and holding securely the port and  
railhead.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1				2	

Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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26

Narvik situation <sup>was</sup> to be cleared up first.

French laid special stress on Narvik.  
British Naval and Air Forces were already  
carrying out operations off the coast  
of Norway.

Urgent requests for assistance from  
Norway to be met with a statement of  
the operations already undertaken by the  
Navy and Air Force, and by a statement  
that forces were being rapidly  
prepared -

The French Force of one Alpine Division  
had <sup>already</sup> received orders for embarkation.

Two British Battalions <sup>was reported</sup> ready at Scapa that  
night.

Further five Battalions <sup>was to be</sup> ready within three  
days.

Further four Battalions within fourteen  
days.

Occupation of Faroe Islands - which took  
place a few days later. <sup>decided on</sup> (17 June)  
<sup>Now being rescheduled for aerodrome</sup>

1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Reference:-

CAP 63 / 160

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27

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large numbers of submarines <sup>will</sup> are

concentrated in ~~Kattegat~~ and

It was decided that as the Germans had stopped neutral shipping in these seas, submarines and aircraft should fire at any vessel met.

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28

## NORWEGIAN OPERATIONS.

**German Ships sunk or damaged.**

Reported seen in  
tow, listing  
heavily. SPEARFISH  
fired 6 torpedoes  
at her, possible  
hits.

Main armament  
damaged in action  
with RENOWN 10/4.

**BLUCHER**  
**(or GNEISENAU)**

Sunk in Oslo Fiord  
by mines and  
Norwegian batteries  
9/4 (admitted by  
Germans).

Torpedoed by TRUANT  
off Christiansand  
9/4 and sunk.

Admitted by Germans  
Hit by 500 lb. bombs  
from aircraft at  
Bergen 10/4 and  
probably sunk.

- 5- Arizona very badly damaged

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CAB 63 / 160

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29

Reported by Norwegian  
Adty. sunk at Oslo  
by OLAV TRIGVISON.

### Reference:

**COA**

63	160
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**Reference:**

**CAB**

63	160
----	-----

160

- 6 -



30

Total number is 32, of which about half were sunk in the region of the Skagerrak, Kattegat and Great Belt. They have included up to date 3 tankers, 1 ammunition ship, 1 passenger ship, and a good many the character of which could not be identified in the dark.

### Reference:-

**CAP 63 / 160**

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-7-

CAB 63 / 160

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33

This Party arrived on Sunday, April 14th.

The expedition includes oilers, net-layers, mine-layer and apparatus of an advance Naval Base.

Their objective was to get ashore and make contact with Norwegian troops in the neighbourhood of Narvik.

*took place the*  
Saturday, April 13th, while they were at sea  
 Second Naval attack at Narvik. WARSPITE and nine destroyers. Harbour cleaned up of enemy ships but town is still in enemy hands.

A day or two later first Brigade arrived in Advance Base at <sup>in</sup>Harstad, a sheltered bay on an Island <sup>near</sup> north-west of Narvik.

1
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1
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4
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2
6

Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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34

The General has carried out his orders to make contact with Norwegians. He first landed his Advance Party of 350 men with himself at a point ~~on the~~ mainland called *Selanger*, thirty miles north of Narvik.

THE PRESENT POSITION AT NARVIK.

Harbour strongly held by Germans, who have occupied Norwegian positions. Good pill-boxes and concrete trenches. Strength estimated 1,300 men. A small German force is eight miles north of Narvik between ~~a~~ *semi-Brigade* of the British forces at ~~Selanger~~ and Narvik.

In the meantime, <sup>just a week ago</sup> on Thursday, April 11th a French Mission had arrived in London

1
2
3
4
5
6

Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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35

in an aeroplane en route to Stockholm.

*C. M. Lundgren - a general*

A British Mission consisting of:-

Admiral Evans of the Broke:

Major-General Lewin: and

The British Air Attaché in Sweden

was associated with the French Mission.

*Owing to bad weather mission only left last Friday*  
OBJECT OF MISSION.

To stiffen resistance of Swedes to any

*for permission*  
 German demands to use Swedish

communications; to re-assure the

Swedes; and to promise support to the

maximum of our power. Situation <sup>was</sup> too  
*uncertain as yet*  
 insecure to specify details.

Intention was for Admiral Evans to

proceed to Norway to "jolly up" the

Norwegian Government. Swedes refused

to let him go. He has since come

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160



36

clamorous for

in order to give the 6 menport somewhere  
at one of the ports south of Narvik,  
to settle

~~where the Government wished to secure~~

on Saturday last, April 13th, ~~to direct~~ <sup>that second echelon</sup> the Second Brigade of the Narvik force, ~~to some other destination in connection with~~ which was already at sea, ~~to some port~~ <sup>the policy of gradually clearing the ports</sup> south of Narvik.

as decided by the Supreme War Council

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38

for more than one Battalion.

Consequently it was decided to send the 146th Brigade further north. They arrived on Tuesday in the Ranen fiord, where there is a place called Mo, the most northerly point of the Norwegian main railways.

They were heavily bombed but not hit. As they included a 20,000 liner this spot was thought unhealthy and they put to sea. They were subsequently landed on the nights of April 16th and 17th at Namsos.

Meanwhile on Sunday, April 14th, a party of 600 seamen and marines in four sloops, with good anti-aircraft armament, sailed from Rosyth and arrived in

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39

~~Alesund (Romsdal fiord) last night.~~

THE PRESENT MILITARY POSITION.

Germans.

Force at and around Oslo estimated at  
 35,000 men <sup>- but very uncertain. Information</sup> (War Room). ~~Situation not~~  
~~still rather vague~~ <sup>very certain,</sup> but they appear to occupy  
 the area south-east of Oslo right up to  
 the Swedish frontier, and are spreading  
 out south-west of Oslo in small  
 parties. They have also worked along  
 the Railway east of Oslo towards the  
 Swedish frontier, which the Press say  
 they have reached. They are also work-  
 ing up <sup>along the railway towards Trondheim</sup> ~~towards one of the ports south~~  
~~of Narvik along the railway.~~

In spite of the heavy losses of trans-  
 ports they seem able to maintain them-  
 selves, ~~no doubt living partly on the~~

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47

the transports have been sunk, and they are reinforced & to a certain extent supplied by air at Haugesund, near Stavanger, about 400

Leipzig

Also working down railway <sup>towards</sup> from port  
Oslo, presumably to effect a junction with Oslo  
south of Narvik and in direction of  
face. But Norwegians are blowing up communication

### Norwegians.

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41

I have not yet heard of any artillery.  
 Short of ammunition. ~~Few if any~~ air-  
 craft, much depressed and morale low.  
 Command indifferent & according to press, much treachery.  
 They are resisting more or less

spasmodically around Oslo. ~~One~~ <sup>One</sup> Then  
 appears to be small detachments here & there. ~~per~~  
 Battalion is at Hamsos and they are  
 in the Trangen area, which are  
 resisting the Germans, to the east and  
 north of one of the ports south of  
 Narvik. British dispositions.

Considerable quantities of rifles, <sup>(5,000)</sup>  
<sup>2 million rounds of</sup> large number of <sup>and some anti-tank rifles</sup>  
 ammunition and Bren guns are available  
 to arm Norwegians as soon as arrange-  
 ments can be made.

General Carton de Wiart landed in a  
 Norwegian Bay on the 16th April.

<sup>Scarf</sup>  
<sup>2 flying boat</sup> Bombed in harbour while in his <sup>Scarf</sup> Junker  
 for a few hours. Unharned, but his  
 Aide-de-Camp wounded and taken home.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160



42

The General has gone up to meet the  
 Commander of a Norwegian force.  
 Naval, Military and Air dispositions  
 have been made for further Allied  
 operations. Very considerable Allied  
 forces are available and operations will  
 not long be delayed.

In the meanwhile we must all be content  
 to put up with the fog of war.

*Perhaps we shall not hear much for a few days  
 If so we must keep our patience.  
 These things cannot be done in a day without  
 long pain and agonisation*

18th April, 1940.

*We may hear stories of landings at this place  
 or that place.*

*They may be false or true.*

*They may be feints to deceive the enemy  
 like the successful feint at Ostend in 1916  
 or they may be temporary diversions to draw the  
 enemy off from the real point.*

*I suggest it is best to refrain from speculation.*

1	2	3	4	5	6
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43

BELGIUM.

(W.M.90th Annex to Minute 2).

As contemplated at S.W.C. an appeal was made to Belgium to admit troops, or at least to co-operate.

This has produced no result except the usual demonstration of "neutrality".

There are now strong reports that the Belgian King and Government have decided to remain neutral if Holland is attacked.

The Belgian Ambassador even asked for explanations about certain preliminary dispositions made by Gamelin in case Holland and/or Belgium were invaded and an advance had to be made at short notice.

1	2	3	4	5	6
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CAB

63

/ 160

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44

He asked for an assurance that they  
would not be sent in without an  
invitation.

Effectively answered (Cabinet 93(40)10).

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## 45

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To-day we hear stories of fresh wiring, which means the spirit  
May be only "war of nerves".

But War Cabinet have to watch all these eventualities.

**Scandinavia:** - but, even if the Western front is attacked, we shall continue the Norway campaign

April 12th. Decided if Germans secured aerodromes or naval bases from Holland, as Russia did from Esthonia, would



46

In the event of German invasion of Holland, great loss of prestige if do nothing. ~~Best policy to invade.~~ French would not agree to tell Belgians.

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## 47

**Very menacing situation.**

Press suddenly turned against us. Making  
difficulties with Wafd in Egypt.

**Mussolini rapidly anti-Ally.**

Ciano goes to bed.

King, Badoglio, Grandi, Duc d'Aosta and

public opinion reported anti-war.  
Navy & Air Force still very friendly.  
The Fascist leaders all for war.

**Trying hard to push over news of our**

## Scandinavian success45

But hard to surmount barrage of censorship.

## Talk with P.M.

Found him not unduly perturbed.

Thinks, if Italians act, not likely to  
be outside Adriatic.

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48

a weak bird  
very light

← unhappy:-

Corfu.  
Dalmation Ports.  
From Albania to Slovenia.  
Roumania.  
Gibraltar (with Spain).  
Balearic Isles.

**Ships still running.**

~~Ministry of Marine and Air Ministry~~

~~friendly to Attachés.~~

24. They invade Yugoslavia War Cabinet's view is that we ~~should~~ ought to attack them.

Ottaviani they will over-run the Balkans &  
we shall only have to intervene a few  
weeks later.

C.O.S. waking it <sup>with</sup> 2-3.

Meanwhile we are consulting the French.  
And proposing to build up Anglo-French fleet

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50

# NORWAY.

On Monday the 8th April between 4.30 and 5.30 a.m. minefields were laid in Norwegian territorial waters.

But German warships and transports had sailed before our first mine had been laid.

As the Prime Minister said in the House of Commons on April 9th -

"There is no doubt that the German plans for the invasion of Norway and Denmark were made and put into operation long before the Allied mining of Norwegian territorial waters".

On Tuesday the 9th April the Supreme War Council attended by M. Reynaud and M. Daladier met in London, at which

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51

it was decided that forces should be sent to ports occupied by the Germans on the Norwegian seaboard. In each case the first object of the Allies will be to recapture from the Germans and to hold securely the port and railhead.

The particular importance of securing Narvik, and so denying Germany access to the iron ore deposits, was stressed. The French force of one Alpine Division earmarked for Scandinavia would be ready to sail within two or three days. Two British battalions ready at Scapa that night. More to follow. British Naval and Air Forces were carrying on operations off the coasts of Norway.

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Wednesday, April 10th.

52

**First British success at Narvik. German destroyers sunk. A German Ammunition ship had also been sunk.**

**Air Attack on Stavanger Aerodrome.**

British aircraft heavily engaged, but 1 German bomber had been damaged.

Thursday, April 11th.

**Further attacks on Stavanger Aerodrome.**

Further Naval and Air reconnaissance.

**"Admiral Scheer" torpedoed. Reported listing heavily, escorted by tug and 2 destroyers.**

Friday, April 12th.

**Expedition sailed at noon this day.**

**Lord Cork in charge of Naval side in**

H.M.S. Aurora from the Forth.

**General Mackesy (and 350 troops) in**

H.M.S. Southampton from Scapa at the

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CAB

63 / 160

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53

A diagram showing a 6x2 grid. The top row contains numbers 1 through 6. Below the grid is a horizontal ruler with tick marks. The numbers 1 and 2 are placed below the ruler, indicating the width of the first and second columns respectively.

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63 / 160

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4



54

Sunday, April 14th. Trondhjem.

A Naval landing-party of 300 men from two Cruisers landed at night at Namsos to the north of Trondhjem. This was part of an operation whose object was to capture Trondhjem.

It had been the intention also to land the 146th Brigade at Namsos, but reports from Namsos showed it to be a difficult place; under four feet of snow; no concealment from air; Namsos itself a very small place; partially evacuated; short of fresh water and food. Not suitable for more than one battalion.

Therefore decided to hold the 146th Brigade away from Namsos and look for

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55

Meanwhile (also Sunday night, April 14th),

a party of 600 marines and seamen sailed from Rosyth in four sloops with good anti-aircraft armament. Intended to land at Aalesund on April 17th. The French contingent comprising the Chasseurs Alpains due to sail into Trondhjem on or about 18th.

CAB 63 / 160



56

Thursday, April 11th.

(Admiral Evans.

(Major-General Lewin

(Air Attache in Sweden

British representatives on Allied Mission.

Admiral Evans, after his Mission to

Stockholm to proceed to Norway to put  
fresh heart into Norwegian Government.

[War Cabinet 88(40), Minutes 1 and 6]

Friday, April 12th.

Anglo-French Mission leave for  
Stockholm.

[War Cabinet 89(40), Minute 5, page 7]

The 4 Battalions, which would form the  
first part of the force to land would  
follow closely after General Mackesy.

[See Confidential Annex, 12th April,  
1940, 89th Conclusions.]

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57  
22nd April, 1940.

Dear Lord Samuel,

Here is the question which the Admiralty think would be particularly useful at the present time, with their reply.

As you will see it is confined to the recent operations in Norwegian waters. I fancy that they are inclined to consider that it would serve no useful purpose and might indeed confuse the public if they went back over the whole of the old ground, including the Courageous, the Royal Oak, and hoc genus omne.

If the Admiralty desires any alteration tomorrow, and these things in these days are never static as you know, I will, if I may, speak to you over the telephone.

Yours sincerely,

*Int.*

The Rt. Hon. Viscount Samuel, G.C.B.,  
52, Portchester Terrace,  
W.2.

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(MS. 2000)

57

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W.2.

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**Reference:**

CAB 63 / 160



*Viscount Samuel*

QUESTION.

To ask H.M. Government whether they are aware that the German Government is claiming to have sunk or severely damaged a large proportion of the British Fleet during the operations in Norwegian Waters, and whether H.M. Government will state the full measure of our naval losses since the German invasion of Norway and Denmark, contrasting them with the mendacious claims made by the enemy.

REPLY.

His Majesty's Government are aware of the recent flights of fancy of the enemy propaganda department which have rivalled its previous achievements on the occasion of the Battle of the River Plate and the ignominious end of the GRAF SPEE. I therefore welcome the opportunity afforded me by the noble Lord of stating the exact measure of our losses.

Since the invasion of Norway and Denmark three destroyers, one Submarine and one Admiralty trawler have been sunk and a fourth destroyer, H.M.S. HARDY, was beached after being <sup>damaged</sup> torpedoed. One Cruiser and two destroyers have been damaged but have returned safely to their bases. H.M.S. RENOWN and H.M.S. RODNEY have both received hits. No serious damage was done in either case nor was the fighting efficiency of the ships in any way affected. In addition, as has been announced in the press, four other destroyers have received some damage not of a serious nature and three cruisers have received trifling damage from bomb splinters.

The Noble Lord's request that I should contrast these losses with those which the enemy claim to have inflicted is no easy task since consistency has never been a characteristic

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59

Reference: CAB 63 / 160



60

## I.

Such advantages as we have gained from the German invasion of Norway can be summed up as follows:

- (1) A substantial reduction in the strength of the German surface fleet - armoured ships, cruisers and especially destroyers.
- (2) Some damage to the German Air Force. Some small part of which must have been severely shaken by air attacks.
- (3) The effect on Italy and some of the Balkan States of our stubborn resistance.

We must follow up these advantages as far as possible. In particular -

- (a) We must take every opportunity to hammer the German Navy. Warships located in ports or fiords such as Trondhjem, Bergen, or Kristiansand, or Oslo, or at sea, must at once be attacked by every available means - surface ships, submarines or aircraft.
- (b) Air bombardments must continue as long as they are giving adequate results.
- (c) We must keep the Norwegian resistance going as long as we can owing to its reaction elsewhere.

## II.

The Military situation is precarious. Our attempts to interrupt the direct sea communications between Germany and Oslo are no longer successful. It is not much use mining the Belts so long as the Sound remains open. Our submarines are being harried in the Kattegat and Skagerrak, and are no longer a serious threat to German sea communications. Subject therefore to occasional and sporadic interruption, we have to assume that Germany will be able to put into Norway through Oslo as many troops as she wishes, and to maintain them by sea.

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**CAB 63 / 160**



61

Reference:- CAB 63/400

- (a) If the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs will consent, to mine the Sound as well as the Belts.
- (b) To reinforce our troops based on Andalusen to the utmost extent that the port and the road and railway communications can maintain.
- (c) To provide large quantities of explosives and other materials for demolitions so as to enable the Norwegian Forces and our own to interrupt the German communications. Royal Engineer and Pioneer Battalions trained in demolitions, and especially railway and road demolitions, should be sent as soon as possible, and further Forces should be trained for this purpose.
- (d) Search should be made for aerodromes, temporarily on lakes, but looking to the future on land, and fighter aircraft should be sent.

CAB 63 / 160

As regards Namsos, it looks as though this port might have to be evacuated in the near future. The best plan if practicable would be to move the base either to Mosjoen, Mo., or Bodo, which are connected by road with Namsos and Trondhjem. It is understood they are being reconnoitred. But we should hold on at Namsos as long as possible, as our detachment contains part of the German Garrison of Trondhjem, and remains a perpetual threat to Trondhjem. The immediate policy therefore should be as follows -



62

- (1) To hold on as long as possible at Namsos.
- (2) To provide anti-aircraft guns and lights there as soon as possible.
- (3) To reconnoitre immediately Mosjoen, Mo and Bodo with a view to withdrawal there if necessary.
- (4) To prepare immediately in full detail a plan for the withdrawal of the Allied Forces from Namsos in case an early withdrawal is unavoidable. If possible this withdrawal should be to the ports further north mentioned above.

V.

On a longer view we have to contemplate the possibility, if not the probability, that we shall not be able to maintain ourselves for more than a few weeks or at the most months in southern Norway. It is essential, however, that we should maintain a foothold in Norway, and if possible a capital from which King Haakon and his Government can function.

It is equally essential that we should clear up the situation at Narvik and maintain a force on the Swedish frontier.

In addition, looking to the future we must hold one or two points on the Norwegian coast from which the Navy can harass the enemy's submarines. If possible, these advance bases should include landing grounds from which our aircraft can take off. The following would appear to be the steps to be taken:

- (a) To reinforce our land forces at Narvik, including some really mobile troops (Chasseurs Alpins) This is in hand.
- (b) To send an aircraft carrier containing fighters and bombers to the Narvik region to support the Army in its operations, and if possible to prevent reinforcement by air.
- (c) Reconnaissance for aerodromes in this region, this is essential in order that we may be able to drop mines and otherwise harass the Germans in the Gulf of Bothnia.

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- 63
- (d) Anti-aircraft and anti-submarine defences for Narvik.
  - (e) Careful reconnaissance of the Norwegian coast with a view to the selection of two bases, one at or near Narvik, the other further south, which can be made bases for light craft; if possible with an aerodrome which can be used by destroyers and aircraft for harassing the Germans all along the Norwegian coast. Strong defences will have to be built up.
  - (f) Select a temporary seat for the Norwegian Government, e.g. Tromsø.
  - (g) Immediate steps should be taken for re-equipping and training Norwegian Forces. A small Anglo-Norwegian Commission should be formed for this purpose.

## VI.

Chiefs of Staff Organisation (? J.P. Committee) should be instructed to prepare plans to counter the threat to our East Coast commerce, which will arise in the event of a German occupation of the coast of southern Norway. The kind of measures required would seem to be as follows:

- (1) Additional aerodromes and landing grounds in the Shetlands from which we can take off in order to shorten the distance in attacking enemy aerodromes and submarine bases in Norway.
- (2) A possible destroyer base in the Shetlands from which we can harass the Norwegian coast.
- (3) Light defences for the above.
- (4) Anti-aircraft defences and aerodromes in the Faroe islands, as well as patrols to prevent their use by U boats.

TREASURY CHAMBERS,

S.W.1.

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In any reply  
please quote Regd. No.



64  
TREASURY CHAMBERS,  
WHITEHALL, S.W.1.  
(Tel: WHITEHALL 1234.)

26th April 1940.

Most Secret

Dear Hankey,

I enclose copy of a letter  
from the Admiralty which you may  
like to have.

Yours sincerely,

S.D. Waley

The Right Hon. Lord Hankey,  
G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

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COPY

65  
Military Branch,  
Admiralty,  
S.W. 1.

25th April, 1940.

SECRET

Dear Waley,

You will probably wish to know about Norwegian gold so far as we know the story.

A telegram was received from a Naval Authority in Norway on 20th April saying that the Norwegian Government had asked for 50 tons of gold to be shipped to England, to be sent over in three lots.

We heard last night that 16 tons was on its way, and I arranged with Bolton of the Bank of England that it should be turned over to the Royal Bank of Scotland at Edinburgh on arrival. This was done this afternoon and I believe it is now en route for London.

We can't tell yet when and how the remainder will arrive but I will let Bolton know as soon as news is received.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) R. JONES

for S. GILMOUR.

S.D. Waley, Esq., C.B., M.C.,  
H.M. Treasury,  
S.W. 1.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1	2	3	4	5	6

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26th April, 1940.

Dear Waley,

Many thanks for sending  
me a copy of a letter from the  
Admiralty about Norwegian gold.  
I was most relieved to read it.

Yours sincerely,

**S.D. Waley, Esq., C.B., M.C.**

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67

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

CAB 63 / 160

160

160

27th April, 1940.



68

MOST SECRET.

28th April, 1940.

My dear Edward,

I enclose a note for circulation to the War Cabinet covering a summary of a book published by a German Admiral apparently in the spring of 1939, which has rather an interesting bearing on the recent German attack on Norway. I actually received it from the Secret Service.

The Prime Minister has agreed to the circulation of the note, as you will see from the attached minute.

Would you kindly have my covering note and the enclosure re-produced. I think before it is circulated I should like to show it to the First Lord, so would you ask your people to let me have a carbon for this purpose.

Yours ever,

Sir Edward Bridges, K.C.B., M.C.

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MOST SECRET.

WAR CABINET.

THE GERMAN ATTACK ON NORWAY.

Note by the Minister without Portfolio.

1. The Prime Minister has agreed with me that the attached very brief summary of a German book entitled "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D. Wolfgang Wegener might be of interest to the members of the War Cabinet.

2. I understand that the book was received by the Foreign Office in May, 1939. The book pointed to the possibility -

- (a) that Denmark and part of Norway might be seized by the Germans in the event of war as a jumping off ground;
- (b) that trade routes would then be attacked with all available naval and air power, working from such shore bases as could be seized or held, or could be concealed, and from supply ships;
- (c) that from Norway there might be a "spring across the North Sea to win a geographical position, e.g. the Shetlands (the door to the Atlantic);"

N.P.

3. <sup>however</sup> (a) that the book appears to assume a more powerful German Fleet than is now left to them.

(Intld.) H.

28th April, 1940.

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69  
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(Intld.) H.

28th April, 1940.

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**HOEWAY.**

1. The plan that has now emerged out of recent discussion for retiring northwards in the event of its becoming desirable to evacuate Namsos is an admirable one which goes some way to meet both the military and political requirements of the present situation. It should go far to cover the Harvik operations; and it should give us time to establish the Norwegian King and Government in the north of Norway; but we ought to envisage stabilising a line of defence at some point where the distance between the coast and the Swedish frontier is short, one flank resting on deep water and the other on mountains impassable to mechanised forces.

2. The Germans are not likely to let us alone as long as we remain in Norway, and the more we can entangle them and lure them on into difficult places where their own communications may be liable to damage by raids from the coast and from the air and the more we can compel them to expend effort and petrol and oil; and the longer their sea communications with Norway are exposed to vexatious losses from attacks by submarines and aircraft - the more all this happens the better for us.

3. We ought to keep the operations alive as long as possible without undue loss in order to make Norway a running sore, just as the Spanish Peninsula was a running sore to Napoleon.

4. And just as in the Peninsula War we armed guerillas to harrass communications and isolated posts and used our Fleet (e.g. on the coast of Catalonia) to raid their communications, so we should endeavour to make things difficult for the

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**CAB 63 / 160**



the Germans in Norway. But we have the added advantage that for bulky supplies and reinforcements the Germans have to cross the open sea.

There is one immediate step however, which is still required, and that is to put in at once larger forces than are at present contemplated at the next halting place (which I will not mention by name in writing) with a view to creating a defence line into which troops coming by road can retire, and to compel the enemy if he wishes to attack it with any prospect of success to deploy substantial forces. (In the absence of aerodromes seaplanes or float-planes ought to be provided.)

In a word the provision contemplated at the places in question is at present on too small a scale. If the resources of the ports permit more A.A. defences and artillery should be supplied.

(Intd.) H.

Treasury Chambers,  
29 April, 1940.

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CAB 63 / 160



72

SECRET.

30th April, 1940.

Dear Harris,

The First Lord has approved the summary of a German book entitled "Die See-Strategie des Weltkrieges" by Vice-Admiral A.D. Wolfgang Wegener, which Lord Hankey is proposing to circulate to members of the War Cabinet, and of which he sent a copy to Sir Edward Bridges on the 28th April. He asks if you will, therefore, have it reproduced and circulated.

I enclose a revised copy of the covering note.

Yours sincerely,

R.M.J. Harris, Esq.,  
Offices of the War Cabinet.

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**CAB 63 / 160**

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73

I shall have to reply next week in the House of Lords to the debate on the Norwegian affair.

Lord Strabolgi has given me notice that he intends to raise the question of why the Navy did not attack the forts. He will suggest that Naval opinion was in favour of such attack and that the Government refused to let them have their way. He will pile up a technical case that the forts were weak; that there was no head cover; and that there were no U-Boats or mines in the Fiord. He will say that it is a crying scandal that the Navy was not used to attack. He sounded rather bitter about it.

situation

**The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, C.H., M.P.**

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54

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CAB 63 / 160



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CAB 63 / 160					



76

The noble Lord Strabolgi has suggested that we ought to have bombarded the forts at the entrance to the Trondhjem Fiord. In fact, if I understand him aright, he suggests that the Government have over-ruled Naval opinion and refused to allow us to do so.

I can assure your lordships that this statement is not in accordance with the facts.

The noble Lord's suggestion of a bombardment is, of course, a most reasonable one. It was studied from the outset. Details were worked out and twice it has actually been in the programme. A naval bombardment is always a very dubious operation. Ships are built to fight ships and not shore forts which have certain advantages over them. There have been notable cases in history where the ships have won, but usually this has been in cases, either of complete surprise or where the coast defences were extremely weak. The bombardment of the outer forts of the Dardanelles in February 1915 is a case in point. In the vast majority of cases however, the bombardment has not been a success and the

Dardanelles

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Dardanelles supplies another notable example in the repulse with heavy loss of our attack on the Narrows in March 1915.

Under modern conditions however, when submarines and aircraft are available to the defence very elaborate arrangements are necessary to protect the bombarding ships. This involves the concentration of great numbers of anti-submarine and anti-aircraft defences, making a large demand on the total forces available in a theatre of war.

There is also the uncertainty even if the bombardment succeeds and the forts are silenced whether the fruits of victory can be reaped. Naval gun fire is not at its best in dealing with entrenched and carefully concealed troops, as I, myself, have witnessed at close range during the Dardanelles campaign.

Before we could have delivered a Naval attack the Germans had had time to dig themselves in and prepare their defence. Your lordships will remember that even at Narvik where the land defences were not serious and the enemy's naval defences

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49

Figure 1 shows a 6x6 grid of squares. A vertical line divides the grid into two regions. The left region is labeled '1' and the right region is labeled '2'. The grid is composed of squares, with some squares shaded gray. The grid is labeled with numbers 1 through 6 along the top and bottom edges.

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(Sgd.) HANKEY.

The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna,  
70, Pall Mall,  
S.W.1.



80

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CAB 63 / 160

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160



Midland Bank Limited

81

Telephone:  
National 1234.

Poultry  
London E.C.2.

3rd May, 1940.

My dear Maurice,

Very many thanks for your letter. Ill-informed gossip is thus dissipated and truth once again prevails. I do not find people here in the least disheartened by the news from Norway.

It was a great pleasure to see you and Lady Hankey again.

Yours ever,

Reggie

The Rt. Hon.  
Lord Hankey, G.C.B. &c., &c.,  
Treasury Chambers,  
Whitehall, S.W.1.

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Went ~~at~~ <sup>to</sup> initiation slowly but  
 Messing in depressive and takey more  
 .. No plan to meet it in advance &  
 should take initiation in the  
 A ~~funny~~ <sup>funny</sup> ~~sublimation~~ <sup>sublimation</sup> in the  
 Would have ~~sublimation~~ <sup>sublimation</sup> influence  
 on reaction.

[?] U.S.A. & civilians  
? Would b. bombing <sup>here</sup> have  
a favourable influence?  
S writes.

Each time it invades a country that  
country is oppressed twice: first by the attack  
& secondly over attack on the <sup>in neutral</sup> bad effect  
[That is because they refuse to  
write us in a case to have a full  
investigation.]

Effort or miracle of G. - told impossible  
from an

Answer Present policy enables to to conserve stocks of petrol

(Not concerning work in Norway)

### Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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8A  
*Lord Hankey*  
~~MR. HANKEY~~

Although yesterday's newspapers had been hinting that the Prime Minister's statement would not be of a pleasant nature, the attitude of the Press this morning is one of unconcealed disappointment. The newspapers as a whole, however, can definitely be divided into two sections. In the first place the opposition papers come out with attacks that are more vicious than logical, attacks which are made mostly on the political direction of the war but also on the Service experts responsible for advising the Cabinet. Some of the newspapers which cannot be described as opposition, whilst being less vicious in their attacks, clearly share the general disappointment and are demanding a complete investigation. On the other hand, and this applies more particularly to the provincial Press, a considerable number accept the unpleasant news much more calmly and proceed to examine with less heat but with great seriousness the reasons which have led to the situation in an attempt to learn the real lessons and profit by them for the future.

In so far as the political attacks are concerned, opposition papers condemn what they describe

25 ...

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REFERENCE  
CAB 63 / 160

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85

Why was the Finnish Force dispersed and only small forces kept available when it must have been known that if German aggression took place it would take place with large Forces?

Why decide to counter a suspected aggression unless determined to counter it effectively?

The Government is accused by the Opposition Press of having grossly under-estimated the ruthless power and enormous resources of the enemy and they declare (as in the case of the "News Chronicle") that the statement now raises the whole conduct of the war as showing that we have strategically suffered a reverse and politically a major defeat. It is

pointed ...

[illegible]



20

pointed out that it is still within our power to save the remainder of Norway and the importance of this being done must not be under estimated. The demand is made that the coastline must be preserved from becoming the hide-out of submarines and Narvik held at all costs. This paper ("News Chronicle") says the reverse calls for a fundamental reassessment both of leadership and the scale and tempo of the national effort and it thinks, as indeed do all of the most critical of the papers, that the country is more than ever determined to do all that is required to win the war. There are in several cases demands for a complete investigation in order to determine responsibility, not with any desire to punish but because "the war can only be won by good Ministers and skilful Generals. The duty is to decide if mistakes were made and in that case weed out the men who made them." Even in some of the more important provincial papers, who are quite calmly examining the situation, there is a demand for the fullest details in the coming debate. The "Yorkshire Post", for instance, which describes the Trondheim effort as an excusable failure calls for

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**CAB 63 / 160**



87

a full debate which "must be fearless and frank", adding "we have written-off Southern Norway, but we have to meet a new situation grim and arduous, but still full of hope." "The gains and losses" it adds, "can only depend on what we are able to learn from them". The "Birmingham Post" recognises that our Forces have so far not been commensurate with our desire but that it is important not to relax efforts, but it ends with the warning "If on Tuesday the Prime Minister can tell the House of Commons that we have started our Scandinavian effort anew and/or that we have relaxed in Scandinavia in order to press our case in the Mediterranean, then the National Government will still have national support. If not, then criticism (at present withheld on national grounds) may become the more active for its previous suppression. For ourselves, we stand fast by the Prime Minister's suggestion that, in Norway, we have only "begun to fight" - that failure in Trondheim merely means renewed effort elsewhere."

In general the provincial press is almost completely free from the purely political attacks made in some of the London papers, but while adopting an attitude ...

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88

Geo. Howard

3rd May, 1940.

[illegible]



89

SECRET.

3rd May, 1940.

I have to speak in the Debate in the House of Lords on the Norwegian affair next Wednesday.

I have learnt that one of the points that will be made against the Government is that the force assembled for Finland, which was thoroughly equipped for winter warfare, was subsequently dispersed, and that the N.W.E.F. which was sent to Norway was not properly equipped.

I suppose the questions that I will be expected to answer will be as follows:

- (1) How was it that the Finland force was not kept in being when we knew that the Germans had assembled transports and were practising embarkation and disembarkation?
- (2) Why was the N.W.E.F. not re-equipped with the material provided originally for the Finland Force?

I should be very glad if you could let me have the answer as soon as practicable as owing to innumerable engagements I find it very hard to find an opportunity except at the week-end to prepare my speech.

I

The Rt. Hon. Oliver Stanley, M.C., M.P.

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SECRET.

6 May 1940.

*Dear Hankey.*

I enclose a complete report on the operations in Norway from which you will be able to extract enough facts to prepare your speech and answers.

It is true that we knew that the Germans were practising embarkation and disembarkation, but there was nothing to show that landings were to be effected in Norway. I can fairly say that this definite suggestion was never made.

The special equipment for the Finland force was withdrawn when the Russo-Finnish war ended. It was stored conveniently and reissued to the troops which took part in the Norwegian Campaign.

We were not, as you know, specially organised to take part in an opposed landing, nor was it possible to land anything in the way of the desirable scale of artillery M.T., and some other essentials for the troops which did actually land owing to the very indifferent port and dock facilities in Norway. We did our best with the men and material which were immediately available, since no delay to perfect the machine could be incurred.

Rt.Hon. Lord Hankey, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.,

*Wm. Hankey*

*O/min. Bunting*

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# OFFICERS ONLY

**SECRET**

Page 1

A NOTE ON WAR OFFICE PLANS FOR OPERATIONS  
IN NORWAY IN APRIL, 1940.

18th December

er Our first preparations for action in Norway were initiated by the end of December. Plans were then made to take advantage of any opportunity which the two Scandinavian Powers might give us to co-operate with them in denying the Gallivare iron ore to Germany. The plans comprised an Allied force of a British Infantry Brigade and a Brigade of Chasseurs Alpins to move in through Narvik, small detachments of one or two battalions each to assist the Norwegians at Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim and a much larger force which would have eventually been built up to several Divisions to support the Swedes in the event of German retaliation against them. These plans were completed about 13th February.

With the development of the Russo-Finnish war these plans were extended. The role of the northern forces entering through Narvik then became to establish Allied forces in Northern Finland to support that country against Russia.

13th March

The force we had originally prepared for operations in Scandinavia and Finland consisted of one Regular Division (5th) from France only one brigade of which had actually embarked; two Territorial Divisions (48nd and 44th) at that time due to go to France but still in England; one Regular Brigade (24th) and five Territorial Army Battalions of the 49th Division in England.

At the conclusion of the Finnish war the regular division, reverted to the control of the B.E.F., certain anti-aircraft units went to France and the pre-arranged move of the 42nd and 44th Divisions to the B.E.F. commenced. The 24th Brigade and the 49th Division remained in England. All special equipment and clothing was collected and held centrally in depots against its being required at a later date. All units that recently proceeded to Norway were issued with this equipment.

5th April

Concurrently with the Cabinet decision to lay mines in Norwegian territorial waters plans were prepared to move troops to Norway in the event of German aggression in that country.

These plans were made on the basis that no move from a British port was to take place until Germany had either violated Norwegian territorial integrity or showed unmistakably her intention of so doing. The plans were completed and the troops actually embarked by the 5th April.

The

[illegible]



93

The intention was to despatch in cruisers -

Two	Territorial Army Bns.	to Stavanger.
Two	" " "	to Bergen.
One	" " "	to Trondheim.

Troops destined for Stavanger would proceed to Bergen if the Germans got there first and those for Bergen to Trondheim if the Germans had reached Bergen first. These battalions were lightly equipped and were to proceed without transport, without artillery and without any heavy military stores. This was necessary as, in order to get them over quickly, they had to be transported in cruisers in which it was impossible to take more than a very reduced scale of baggage and certainly no transport. Their role was simply to forestall the Germans and not in any sense to carry out offensive operations from these places. Norwegian acquiescence and indeed close co-operation was naturally expected.

At the same time a force of one brigade group was to be despatched to Narvik. The role of this force was to secure the port of Narvik and the rail communications from it as far as the Swedish frontier. The force was to be prepared to advance into Sweden should Germany violate Sweden or should the Swedes call for help. Their role then would have been to secure the Gallivare ore fields.

7th April

On the 7th April the news of the German fleet movements in the North Sea resulted in the Battle Fleet and the Second Cruiser Squadron putting to sea. These were followed on the 8th April by the First Cruiser Squadron. The troops which had been embarked in cruisers were hurriedly disembarked and put into camp and those in transports and the further echelons that were about to embark were left without escorts. Any action by land forces in Norway was thus impossible until the return of the Fleet and until the Naval position in the North Sea was clarified. This unexpected abandonment of a pre-arranged plan cost us delay which resulted in the Germans being able to forestall us at Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik.

9th April

The Germans occupied these places on 9th April. Had our troops sailed in accordance with the pre-arranged plan there is every reason to believe that they would have been able to effect a landing anyhow at Trondheim, if not at the other ports. An appreciation of the situation by the Chiefs of Staff resulted in their coming to the conclusion that the recapture of Narvik and the ejection of the Germans from the Trondheim area were necessary. The former operation having the same object as before, the latter having the military objective of securing a base and port suitable for such further operations as we might deem it desirable to undertake in assisting the Norwegians to resist German aggression.

12th April

At first only one of these plans was adopted, i.e., operations to recapture Narvik; and so, on the 12th April this force, which by now had been moved to Scapa, proceeded to that place. These troops were placed under the command of General

/Mackesy

1	2	3	4	5	6

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Our information showed us that the Germans had not yet occupied the fjord and port of Namsos. Neither had they reached or occupied Andalsnes. It was clear that it would be a race for one or either of these places and that we could not afford to wait for the regular brigade from France and so must be prepared to run the risk of landing lightly equipped troops, without guns or tanks, in order to forestall the Germans and form a bridgehead behind which these and subsequent forces could be disembarked.

The diversion of the 146 Bde, to which I have referred took place on 14th April and the successful landings were made on the nights of 16th/17th April and 17th/18th April. This operation was achieved without casualty the troops being disembarked from men of war to which they had been transferred some distance from the fjords at Namsos. The Chasseurs Alpins were directed on Namsoy now instead of Narvik and their disembarkation commenced some three days later. With the Chasseurs Alpins were field guns and anti-aircraft artillery. The 146 Bde. transport was successfully disembarked on 22nd April.

/In



Mackesy and in addition to his regular (24) brigade he was given the 146 Inf. Bde. (Brigadier Phillips) and informed that his force would be followed by a brigade of Chasseurs Alpins. The plan was to effect a landing at Harstad north of Narvik, there to gain contact with such Norwegian troops as were still fighting and to develop operations southwards for the capture of the town of Narvik itself and the railway to the Swedish frontier.

Operations against Trondheim were not at the moment considered feasible as the only troops left were two battalions of 148 Bde. (Brigadier Morgan). The success of the Naval attack on Narvik and the importance of developing some force against Trondheim led the Chiefs of Staff to decide on diverting the 146 Bde. whilst at sea, from General Mackesy's force to the Trondheim area.

This diversion was possible because this brigade and its vehicles with adequate stores for 30 days at least had been embarked in separate ships, the possibility of such a diversion having been foreseen.

It was obvious that a direct attack on Trondheim could not be staged at short notice and that such an attack would have to be carried out by the very best of troops available. This postulated the withdrawal of a regular brigade at least from France, which could not be done in under a certain time.

Our information showed us that the Germans had not yet occupied the fjord and port of Namsos. Neither had they reached or occupied Andalsnes. It was clear that it would be a race for one or either of these places and that we could not afford to wait for the regular brigade from France and so must be prepared to run the risk of landing lightly equipped troops, without guns or tanks, in order to forestall the Germans and form a bridgehead behind which these and subsequent forces could be disembarked.

14th April

The diversion of the 146 Bde. to which I have referred took place on 14th April and the successful landings were made on the nights of 16th/17th April and 17th/18th April. This operation was achieved without casualty the troops being disembarked from men of war to which they had been transferred some distance from the fjords at Namsos. The Chasseurs Alpins were directed on Namsos now instead of Narvik and their disembarkation commenced some three days later. With the Chasseurs Alpins were field guns and anti-aircraft artillery. The 146 Bde. transport was successfully disembarked on 22nd April.

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In the meantime for the direct attack on Trondheim a regular brigade was brought from France with 1,000 specially selected Canadian troops and a Territorial infantry brigade in reserve, all of which were embarked in ships of war.

18th April

The intention was that General Carton de Wiart in command of the force at Namsos should attack the Germans from the north with the object of drawing their troops northwards from the Trondheim area. At the same time naval landings and army landings at Alesund and Andalsnes were to draw the Germans attention to the south. To this end the 148 Brigade (Brigadier Morgan) which consisted of two battalions with light anti-aircraft artillery was embarked in ships of war and despatched to Andalsnes. These troops were successfully disembarked on 18th April. The remainder of the brigade and its transport followed immediately. Unfortunately the ship conveying the unit's armoured carriers and first line transport with additional anti-aircraft guns was torpedoed and sunk.

By arrangement with the Royal Navy the disembarkation at both Namsos and Andalsnes were covered by anti-aircraft cruisers and, as soon as they could be made available (24th April) additional air defence was given by fighter aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm operating to aircraft carriers.

All initial landings had been carried out from ships of war under cover of naval anti-aircraft cruiser protection.

19th April

Plans for the direct attack on Trondheim were complete on April 15th and the expedition was to have sailed on April 20th. On 19th April, however, having reconsidered all the implications of this operation, the Chiefs came to the conclusion that it should be abandoned.

21st April

Brigadier Morgan's force which was now operating south of Dombas was immediately reinforced by the 15th (Regular) Brigade. This brigade was landed on 21st April.

Andalsnes was now provided with twelve light anti-aircraft guns and a battery of heavy anti-aircraft artillery was embarked and put to sea. This battery was landed on 27th April.

The scale of German air attack on both Andalsnes and Namsos was heavy and though the temporary expedient of placing A.A. cruisers undoubtedly enabled us to achieve such successes as we had, it was apparent that unless some degree of air superiority could be obtained the chances of landing heavy stores, artillery and further anti-aircraft guns was likely to be most hazardous. At this time also reports from

/Brigadier

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CAB 63 / 160

Territorial Army battalions were used and so far as the scanty information which we have as yet received can show they thoroughly justified their employment. They were in each case rapidly backed by either regular British or French troops. As has been shown they were initially employed because they were the first troops available. They were adequately equipped for withstanding the rigorous climatic conditions they had to face and were only landed in advance of their transport because the situation demanded rapid action and to have to delay their arrival until that of the slow types of ships that require to be used for the carriage of mechanical vehicles was obviously undesirable.

G.S. (P)  
4.5.40.



Q7  
Copy No. 3

~~SECRET~~

The project of stopping the ore traffic from Narvik to Germany first came under active discussion when the First Lord of the Admiralty put forward a proposal (W.P.(39) 162) to the War Cabinet that naval action should take place in Norwegian territorial waters. At the same time, the more important project of stopping the whole of the exports of iron ore from Northern Sweden to Germany was also examined. The Russo-Finnish war offered a pretext for sending forces through Norway and Sweden to the assistance of Finland, and thus getting into position to control the orefields.

The implications of these projects were fully examined by the Chiefs of Staff. In W.F. (39) 169, they pointed out that action in Norwegian territorial waters might be met by a German invasion of Southern Norway, which we would be unable to prevent, and the strategic consequences of which would be unfortunate. It would be necessary, therefore, for us to prepare forces to seize

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CAB 63 / 160



98

After considerable discussion, and after a preliminary approach to the Norwegian and Swedish Governments, it was decided not to proceed with action inside Norwegian territorial waters (W.M.(40) 10th Conclusions, Minute 1).

As a result of discussions with the French at a meeting of the Supreme War Council on 5th February, 1940, preparations were put in hand for the despatch of a force to the assistance of Finland - the leading troops of the force to be ready to land in Norway on 20th March. It was fully realised that the arrival of this force in Scandinavia might involve Sweden and Norway in war with Germany. Consequently, in accordance with the recommendations made by the Chiefs of Staff in W.P.(39) 179, the following forces were got ready:-

- (a) A force consisting of one British Brigade and two Demi-Brigades of Chasseurs Alpins to land at Narvik, and pass through to the head of the Gulf of Bothnia, in preparation for operations in Finland.
- (b) Forces to occupy Norwegian ports, and deny them to the Germans, as follows:-
- |           |   |               |
|-----------|---|---------------|
| Trondhjem | - | 1 battalion.  |
| Bergen    | - | 2 battalions. |
| Stavanger | - | 2 battalions. |

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98

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CAB 63 / 160

- Trondhjem - 1 battalion.  
Bergen - 2 battalions.  
Stavanger - 2 battalions.



- 99
- (e) A force of about 3 Divisions and 5 Squadrons R.A.F. to pass through to the assistance of the Swedes.

16TH MARCH, 1940.

Just as all preparations were complete for the despatch of the above forces, the Finnish resistance collapsed, and the pretext was thus removed. The War Cabinet authorised the dispersal of the forces to take place as soon as the ratification of peace terms was assured (W.M. (40) 68th Conclusions, Minute 4). This decision became effective the same evening, and the expedition was broken up.

28TH MARCH, 1940.

As a result of a meeting of the Supreme War Council on 28th March, the original proposal for the stoppage of traffic from Narvik by the laying of a minefield once more came to the fore, and a decision in favour of action was taken.

31ST MARCH, 1940.

The Chiefs of Staff re-examined possible German reactions to the laying of the minefield, and recommended that the following forces should be made ready as a precautionary measure:-

- (a) For Narvik - 1 British Brigade and a French Contingent.
- (b) For Trondheim - 1 British Battalion.
- (c) For Bergen - 2 British Battalions.
- (d) For Stavanger - 2 British Battalions.

These forces were to be ready to sail when the minefield was laid, so that if the Germans

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100

WEDNESDAY  
3RD APRIL.

THURSDAY  
4TH APRIL.

When was it  
delivered?

W.P.(40) 118 recommended that, as it was now unlikely that Germany would invade Sweden, the large forces previously earmarked for action in Southern Sweden should no longer be maintained in readiness at the expense of the despatch of troops to the B.E.F. base, etc; preparations should, however, continue for a force of two divisions to be assembled if necessary.

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THURSDAY  
30 APRIL  
1940

101  
by withdrawal from France. Three battalions should remain earmarked for Narvik and five battalions for the Southern Norwegian ports, and the remainder of the 49th Division should be mobilised and held in readiness to reinforce any of these as might be required.

FRIDAY  
1 APRIL

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 83, Minute 6) approved the proposals of the Chiefs of Staff (W.M.(40) 117 and 118). The instructions for the commanders of the forces concerned were to be submitted for approval the next day.

SATURDAY  
2 APRIL

The Chiefs of Staff submitted to the War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 83, Minute 6) a Note (W.M.(40)122) setting out instructions for the forces to be sent to Norwegian ports in the event of German aggression on Southern Norway or Sweden. It was assumed that the forces would be landed with the general co-operation of the Norwegian Government, though they might have to deal with minor local opposition. The function of the Narvik force was to secure that port and the communications with the ore fields; it should not enter Sweden without further orders. The Forces for the other ports had the task of forestalling the Germans and denying them the use of the ports and air facilities at Stavanger, Bergen and Trondheim. At Stavanger the operations was in the nature of a raid as it might not be possible to hold this port against German attack. These instructions (and also instructions for naval commanders, circulated at the meeting) were approved with minor amendments.

SUNDAY  
3 APRIL

During the morning, air reconnaissances reported a German force of one cruiser and six destroyers steaming north-west of Horn's Reef. A bomber force sent out as a result of this report did not locate that force but intercepted another consisting of one battle-cruiser, two small and one large cruisers, and fourteen destroyers 76 miles N.N.W. of Horn's Reef, which they attacked

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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102

In the evening, the main battle fleet and the second cruiser squadron sailed from Sopsa and Rosyth respectively in the hope of engaging the German fleet off the Norwegian coast.

The War Cabinet (W.M. (40) 84) were informed of the events of the previous day, and of the movements of the Fleet. They were also informed that the first cruiser squadron which had been taking on troops at Haavth for the possible operation of occupying Norwegian ports, had disembarked the troops and explosives and would be sailing shortly without them. It seemed possible though unlikely that the intention of the German force was to seize Harvik. The minefield in the Vest Fjord had been laid in the early hours, but the force for the southern minefield had been ordered back until the naval situation could be cleared up. It seemed likely that the German fleet would meet the force covering the mine-laying and that an engagement would ensue. It was decided to pass on to the Norwegian Navy our information as to German naval movements.

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160

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103

A vertical ruler with markings from 1 to 6. The markings are on the right side, with '1' at the top and '6' at the bottom. The ruler is used to measure the height of the letters in the adjacent text.

Reference: CAB 63 / 160

47



103

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CAB 63 / 160

47



104

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

48



105  
Tuesday, 9th April.  
(CONT'D).

The War Cabinet met again at 12.0 noon (W.M.(40) 86). They were told that the Danish Government had come to terms with the Germans, but that the Norwegian Government was so far resisting.

They took note of the proposals of the Chiefs of Staff and were informed by the First Lord of the Admiralty that the first problem was to deal with the two German battle-cruisers. They approved instructions to our submarine commanders to attack, without warning, all shipping in the Skagerrak.

At the meeting of the Supreme War Council at 4.15 p.m. the French stressed the importance of not losing sight of the central Allied aim of cutting off Germany's supplies of iron ore from Scandinavia. It was still not certain at this time whether the Germans had actually seized Narvik, and it was thought that even if reports to this effect were true they would have very small forces there and that they could be ejected without great difficulty. There was some discussion as to the extent to which troops should be used for operations at Narvik as against Trondheim and Bergen but nothing definite could be said on this question in the absence of accurate information as to the German forces at each of the ports. It was agreed that strong forces should be sent to ports on the Norwegian seaboard and that in determining the forces to be sent to each the particular importance of securing Narvik should be borne in mind. No forces should be despatched until the naval

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REFERENCE  
CAB 63 / 160

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106

The Norwegian Government should be told of the operations already undertaken by the British Navy and Air Force and that further forces were rapidly being prepared to help them, but it was not possible to meet their request for direct air assistance in the absence of suitable aerodromes. The French were informed of the British battalions available for embarkation at an early date and explained that the Alpine division of some 15,000 men prepared for the Narvik expedition which had previously been contemplated was moving to Brest and would be ready to embark in about 40 hours.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 9.30 p.m. with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair. According to reports now available it

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### References:

CAB 63 / 160

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107

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REFERENCE - CAB 63 / 160

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106

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## References



10

CAB 63 / 160



109

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

CAB 63 / 160

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CAB 63 / 160												

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

Good Night



112  
Friday, April 12th.

The reports available in the morning stated that the Norwegian Army was established in a line near Elverum. A mixed brigade was reported to be 40 miles north-east of Narvik. The aerodrome at Stavanger had been attacked, but reports were not yet available.

The War Cabinet at their morning meeting (W.M. (40) 89) were told that we were getting near locating all the German big ships so that our naval forces could operate more freely.<sup>x</sup> A telegram had been received from the British Minister at Stockholm urging strongly that the first allied effort should be the recapture of Trondhjem not Narvik.

They were told that Lord Cork and General Mackesy were sailing that day for the Narvik area. The four battalions to form the first part of the forces to land would follow closely. There was some discussion of the importance of the recapture of Trondhjem, but the First Lord of the Admiralty pointed out that this would be a very difficult operation. It was agreed that it would, in any case, be desirable to secure a footing at Namsos if possible.

At a second meeting of the War Cabinet in the afternoon (W.M. (40) 90) called primarily for other matters, their attention was drawn to messages from the British Minister in Norway stressing the desirability of early military operations in southern Norway. The difficulties of an opposed landing at Trondhjem

were

x  
An unofficial report  
had been received 12/1-  
The Admiral Saken had  
been seen damaged.  
A report from the  
submarine 12/1- carried  
out the attack was not  
received till the following  
day.

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Nashville

7. 10. 1900

Two days

The reports available in the morning suggested that the Norwegians had evacuated Elverum and that an engagement at Eldavold was likely. Swedish mobilisation was proceeding. Aircraft from H.M.S. Furious had damaged two destroyers at Narvik.

A telegram was received from the Allied Mission to Sweden emphasising the vital importance of early operations to re-capture Trondhjem. The Chiefs of Staff, meeting in the morning, had their attention drawn to this telegram, but in

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Reference:-

CAB 63 / 160



Saturday,  
April 13th.  
(CONT'D.)

114  
discussing it took the line that it had been definitely decided that the integrity of the Narvik operation "Rupert" should not be compromised by other operations elsewhere. In any case, the only part of the Narvik Expedition which could be diverted elsewhere as a self-contained group would be the French contingent.

Trondhjem  
Narvik  
Trondhjem  
The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 91) considered the various arguments advanced for treating the capture of Trondhjem as the first Allied objective. The First Lord of the Admiralty was anxious not to weaken our preparations for taking Narvik, but other members of the Cabinet were very much impressed with the arguments for the importance of Trondhjem and it was suggested that we should obtain permission from the French to use the Chasseurs Alps elsewhere than at Narvik, if necessary. It was explained that an attempt was being made to occupy Narvik at once by a coup de main, that a small naval landing at Namsos was planned for that same evening, and that the Military Co-ordination Committee was proposing to consider that evening where the first British Battalions for the Trondhjem area should be landed. In view of all these considerations, it was eventually agreed to tell the Swedish and Norwegian Governments that we intended to re-capture both Narvik and Trondhjem, to inform the French accordingly, and to ask them to give us liberty to use the force of Chasseurs Alps elsewhere than at Narvik.

In the afternoon, a telegram was received from Paris to the effect that the French War Committee now concluded that Trondhjem was the vital point.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the chair, at 8.0 p.m., were informed of a telegram offering further French forces, provided that we could supply their transport. They approved instructions for the Commander of force "Maurice" for the Trondhjem area and considered the

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Reference  
CAB 63 / 160

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preparation of reinforcements for the 5 Battalions which were to be landed for this operation. They decided to stop the movement to France of the 127th Infantry Brigade, but thought no preparations should yet be made for the withdrawal of regular troops from France.

It became known during the afternoon that at about midday H.M.S. WARSPITE and nine destroyers had sunk or completely disabled seven enemy destroyers in Narvik Bay and the fjord behind it and had occupied Narvik harbour. Three of our destroyers had been damaged.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met again at 10.30 p.m. with the First Lord of the Admiralty in the Chair, to review the situation in the light of the destruction of the German naval forces at Narvik. The situation in Narvik town was not yet clear but it seemed possible that our forces might be able to land in the town itself and it was agreed that if the information, in the opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, justified the assumption that the town could be occupied without serious opposition, arrangements should be made for diverting the second Brigade of the Narvik force to Namsos. General Carton de Wiart could fly to Namsos to meet this Brigade and give its Commander revised instructions, and the same aircraft could convey the new set of maps that they would require.

In view of the altered situation and the latest information received from the Trondhjem area, it was decided to ask the Service Staffs to study at once the implications of a direct landing of part of the force "Maurice" at Trondhjem, instead of its all going to Namsos in the first instance.

Sunday.  
14th April.

The morning report gave no definite news of German movements in Norway. Their forces in that country were estimated at roughly three divisions, including 15,000 troops in the Oslo area.



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*Reference:-*  
**CAB 63 / 160**



117

Sunday, April 14th.  
(CONT'D.)

of the steps taken by the Chiefs of Staff and that the 146th Brigade would be beginning its landing at Namsos, all being well, at dusk on April 15th. 600 marines and sailors in four sloops would be landing at Aalesund in the early hours of April 17th.

Monday, April 15th.

The morning report showed that our first troops had been landed in the Narvik area at Sag Fiord and had established contact with the Norwegian troops and also with the enemy. The naval landing of 300 men at Namsos had been successfully carried out. In Trondhjem the Germans were reported to have strengthened their defences with heavy artillery. Germans movements were not clear but their main force seemed to be on the railways from Oslo to Sweden to Hamar and to Bergen.

Aircraft had carried out attacks on Stavanger aerodrome and seaplanes in the fiord nearby apparently with some success, and had also been engaged on mine-laying in the Great Belt.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.30 a.m., decided that in view of the air danger it would not be desirable to land the troops at Namsos as originally planned. The transports should go to Lillegrona and the troops conveyed thence to Namsos by destroyers. The naval force for landing at Aalesund was diverted to Andalsnes. Morgan's Brigade and the French contingent were to be held up until the situation at Namsos became clearer. If the Narvik situation could be cleared up, it was hoped to use the Guard's Brigade from there for ~~operation~~ <sup>a direct attack on</sup> Trondhjem and also <sup>possibly</sup> to use Harstad, near Narvik, as an advanced base for ~~a Trondhjem~~ <sup>making such an attack.</sup>

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Trendelenburg

W. H. H. H.

Alfred Hill

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 93) were given the above information and were told also that the Norwegians reported that the Germans had gained control of the west battery at the entrance to Trondhjem fiord. The Norwegians were in occupation of Stenkjeer (between Trondhjem and Namsos) the defences of Narvik were stiffening and it was now clear that we could not count on taking it without resistance. The First Lord of the Admiralty reported the diversion of the 146th Brigade to the Namsos area but explained that the snow conditions, lack of concealment from the air, etc. would make it very difficult to land a considerable force there and that the whole operation would be very hazardous. One battalion was to be landed in the first instance and other landing places were being looked for. He explained also that the Commander-in-Chief had not been very keen on forcing his way into Trondhjem because of the risk of air attack. The War Cabinet reaffirmed the importance which they attached to the occupation of Trondhjem at the earliest possible moment, and some disappointment was expressed <sup>that</sup> ~~when~~ it had been found necessary to delay our landings in the Trondhjem area; but they endorsed the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff to restrict further landings at Namsos to one battalion until the situation should become clearer.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 5.30 p.m. under the First Lord of the Admiralty, were told that the naval force for Andalsnes had not yet left on account of bad weather.

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**CAB 63 / 160**



Franklin

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 6.45 p.m. considered the pros and cons <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ a direct attack on Trondhjem as against <sup>attempt to</sup> ~~anticipated assault~~ <sup>isolate</sup> ~~on~~ it by exploiting the situation from Namsos and Andalsnes. Also the difficulties of using Trondhjem if it could be secured, in view of the air attack to which it would be subjected. They approved in principle the conception of assaulting it from south and north and also of a direct attack, timed to take advantage of these operations, and instructed that plans and preparations for a direct attack should be put in hand forthwith.

The morning report estimated the number of German troops in Norway at 57,000. They were said to be operating on a line from near Elverum to Frederikstad. In the Trondhjem area the Norwegians held Namsos and Stenkjeer. General Carton de Wiart had arrived at Namsos by flying-boat.

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Tuesday, April 16th.  
(CONT'D.)

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.45 a.m., discussed plans for the Trondhjem operation.

The War Cabinet, at a short meeting at 11.30 a.m. (W.M.(40) 94) were given the above information and told also that the forts guarding the entrance to Trondhjem harbour were in German hands but extremely vulnerable to air attack. They decided to send Sir Edward Evans to Norway to maintain contact with the King.

The Military Co-ordination Committee met ~~at 12.30 p.m.~~ <sup>at 12.30 p.m.</sup> with the Prime Minister in the chair. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff explained the plan of operations which had been adopted and the instructions given to Carton de Wiart to "exploit from Namsos". He had said that he did not require Morgan's Brigade, which was thus available for reinforcing Andalsnes. It was necessary at this stage to treat the forces at Namsos and at Andalsnes and those intended for direct attack as constituting separate commands. Operations from Namsos could begin on April 21st but these operations and those based on Andalsnes were related to the main operation and careful timing was needed. Plans were still being considered for the main operation on Trondhjem. (The Prime Minister emphasised the need for the least possible delay). This required troops of the first quality and there were available only two battalions of Guards and two battalions of the Foreign Legion. A demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins were available for a reserve but it would be wasteful to use these for the direct attack. It therefore seemed necessary to use a regular British brigade from France.

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**CAB 63 / 160**

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**CAB 63 / 160**



121

Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

The morning report stated that in the Trondhjem area the fort at Hegra was still in Norwegian hands but the Germans were said to have landed at Inderoy, north-east of Trondhjem fiord. Parachute troops landing at Dombaas had been put out of action by the Norwegians. A German submarine had been sunk in the Narvik area.

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122  
Wednesday, April 17th.  
(CONT'D.)

They were in agreement with his proposal to send a telegram urging that an early attack should be made on Narvik with the forces already available, i.e. the Guards Brigade. "Send us your appreciation and act at once if you think right".

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 10.0 a.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair and approved the despatch of a telegram as above to General Mackesy and Lord Cork. They decided, in the light of the latest information from Namsos, to divert the convoy carrying the first demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins direct to Namsos in the hope that the troops could land on the nights of April 19th and 20th and could be employed against the Germans north-east of Trondhjem.

They were informed that the troops available for a direct landing at Trondhjem would consist of one regular brigade and two Canadian battalions, with <sup>part</sup> ~~a~~ number of territorial brigades as a floating reserve. The second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins would not arrive until 25th April and it was hoped to make use of them for operations from Trondhjem after its occupation.

(wm(42)95)  
The War Cabinet were informed of the plans for an attack on Trondhjem with the forces indicated above and gave their general approval.

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 3.15 p.m. discussed with General Hotblack his plans for the Trondhjem landing.

Thursday, April 18th.

The morning report stated that H.M.S. SUFFOLK had bombarded the aerodrome at Stavanger the previous evening but had been seriously damaged by air attack on her return. The unloading of transports at Namsos had begun and the force of marines had landed at Andalsnes on the previous

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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124

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CAB 63 / 160

CAB 63 / 160

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27

Norwegian headquarters reported their position in the neighbourhood of Hamar and Gjelvik on the main routes north from Oslo.



125

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Reference - CAB 63 / 160

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28



Friday, April 19th.  
(CONT'D.)

126  
They took the view that it was not essential to use this vessel at Narvik and that the Trondhjem operation must in any case take precedence.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 97) were informed of the outlined plan prepared for action at Narvik with the forces now available and were told that the main attack on Trondhjem could not now take place until April 25th.

When the Chiefs of Staff met at 2.0 p.m., the Chief of Naval Staff introduced a proposal that in view of the conditions which had developed in the Namsos and Molde areas, it would be more advantageous to exploit the "pincer" movement on Trondhjem to the maximum extent and not to attempt the direct assault into the centre. After a full discussion, in which it was felt that the exploitation of the landings already successfully carried through was a more certain plan than the direct "hammer" attack, it was agreed that subject to the approval of the War Cabinet the plans for the capture of Trondhjem should be altered accordingly, provided the scale of air attack could be completed with. The War Office were asked to examine at once the plan required for the alternative general idea, the military forces needed and where and when they should land and the estimated time before Trondhjem itself would be invested.

In view of this advice from the Chiefs of Staff and in order to stop the loading of ships for the "hammer" operation which it was now proposed to cancel, the First Lord of the Admiralty obtained an immediate decision from the Prime Minister authorising this to be done.

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References: CAB 63 / 160





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REFERENCE--  
CAB 63 / 160

30



128

Reference:- CAB 63 / 160



Saturday, April 20th.  
(CONT'D.)

129  
The First Lord of the Admiralty reported that H.M.S. WARSPITE was returning to the Narvik area in view of this change of plan and that some progress might be expected very soon. It was important to liquidate the position at Narvik and to establish ourselves on the Swedish frontier within a month, i.e. before the German shipping could get up to Lulea.

The War Cabinet took note of this discussion.

Sunday, April 21st.

The morning report told that Namsos had been badly bombed on the previous day and that the town was inflames. The leading British troops based on Namsos were at Verdal.

The Germans were now estimated to have four divisions in Norway and their troops in Trondhjem were said to <sup>have been</sup> reinforced by air and possibly by sea. The Norwegians were continuing to withdraw on the Oslo front after rearguard actions in the Hamar region.

Photographs showed that the aerodrome at Stavanger had been seriously damaged.

The War Cabinet, meeting at 4.30 p.m., were told of the bombing of Namsos. Stores and ammunition had probably been destroyed but the wharf had not been damaged.

As regards the Andalanes force, Brigadier Morgan had pushed ahead and had joined the Norwegians at Lillehammer with two battalions. A ship with transport for this force had unfortunately been sunk by a submarine.

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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Sunday, April 21st.  
(CONT'D.)

Various plans for providing air protection were discussed, including the possibility of operating Gladiators from a frozen lake near Andalsnes. It was recognised that the present position was one of some anxiety and that we had undertaken a very hazardous operation in throwing ashore lightly equipped forces without proper maintenance facilities. There was some discussion as to the disposal of the various reinforcements en route to Norway, but this was left over for further consideration by the Military Co-ordination Committee.

The War Cabinet were informed that in view of an apparent lack of harmony between Admiral Lord Cork and General Mackesy, the former had been appointed to take supreme command of the whole of the Narvik operation. There was a preliminary discussion of the difficulties involved in having to consider the possibility of bombarding Narvik.

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 9.30 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair, considered the best method for employing the Allied forces in Norway in the light of the latest available information. The suggestion was made that the French might be employed south of Trondhjem and the British north of it, but to this it was objected that the French troops were the more mobile and that some of them were therefore required for the northern operation. It seemed very probable that Namsos could not accommodate any more troops and a message had been received from Carton de Wiart suggesting that it might be necessary to evacuate <sup>the</sup> forces that were already there. No firm decisions could be taken



131  
Sunday, April 21st.  
(CONT'D.)

on the available information and it could only be decided to try to obtain from the French a free hand as to the use to be made of their troops.

Monday, April 22nd.

The morning summary reported that a French transport had arrived safely at Namsos with stores, etc. The Germans were said to have taken Elverum and to be pushing on towards Rena. Further German concentrations at Baltic ports were reported.

Another successful air raid at Stavanger aerodrome had been carried out.

The Chiefs of Staff met at 9.0 a.m. and considered the latest telegrams received from General Carton de Wiart at Namsos. Though they showed no recognition of the fact that it might be necessary to evacuate that base, the Staffs decided that it was advisable to begin to consider what this would involve.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 100) met with the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the chair, as the Prime Minister and the First Lord of the Admiralty were at the meeting of the Supreme War Council in Paris. They were informed of the difficult situation that had arisen at Namsos, and that it might be necessary to evacuate it. No decisions could be taken until the situation became clearer.

They considered further the policy to be adopted in regard to the bombardment of Narvik.

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132

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

CAB 63 / 160

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133

At Namsoo the French supply ship mentioned on the previous day had at first been unable to berth, but had returned and completed unloading on the evening of the 22nd. A British ship had unloaded half its supplies.

The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 10.30 a.m. considered that in the light of the latest information the position at Hamaon must be regarded as precarious.

A German force had been landed from warships on 21st April at the head of Steinkjaer Fjord in the rear of the advanced troops of the 146th Brigade. The latter had in consequence, been engaged in a very difficult operation to extricate themselves, especially as our men were unable to move off the road owing to deep snow, while the enemy were using snow-shoes. They had been ordered to retire at night to Steinkjaer and Brigadier Phillips had been ordered then to withdraw his Brigade by the Steinkjaer-Namsos road; but this might be a very difficult operation. In view of the military situation and the state of the base complete discretion had been left to General Carton de Wiart to decide on evacuation if necessary. The naval staff were, however, of opinion that unloading in the Namsos area by night was still a definite possibility and it might be possible to continue operating this base if the air menace could be brought under control. Two aircraft-carriers were on the way from Scapa and it was hoped to

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CAB 63 / 160

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134

The Military Co-ordination Committee, meeting at 10 p.m. were informed that Phillips' Brigade was retiring on a bridgehead held by the French in the Bangeund-Namsos area.

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reference - CAB 63 / 160



Tuesday, April 23rd.  
(CONT'D.)

The Norwegian troops with one-and-a-half battalions of Morgan's Brigade were said to be between Tretten and Koppang. The 15th Brigade was beginning to land at Andalsnes and its landing would be completed in three nights. Petrol and maintenance stores for aircraft had also arrived there.

They were informed that the Staffs were considering a plan for a modified "hammer" operation, but that the first essential was to stabilise the southern front. They accepted the recommendation of the Chiefs of Staff in regard to the despatch of the second demi-brigade of Chasseurs Alpins to Narvik.

Wednesday, April 24th.

According to <sup>HL</sup> morning report we now had two aircraft carriers operating off the Norwegian coast. Heavy snow-storms had been impeding disembarkation in the Narvik area. Phillips' Brigade was retiring slowly towards Namsos and the British and Norwegian forces were reported to have retired to a point some 20 miles north of Lillehammer.

The Chiefs of Staff, meeting at 10.0 a.m., were informed that Lieut.-General Massy's plan for operations in the Trondhjem area would be ready later in the day.

The War Cabinet (W.M.(40) 102) discussed the general plan of campaign to be adopted on the southern front. It was pointed out that, unless we could find some means of attacking Trondhjem within a short time, we could not hope to hold up

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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136

Figure 1 shows a 1D lattice with 10 sites. The sites are labeled 1 through 10 from left to right. A vertical line is drawn between sites 4 and 5, labeled '1'.

Reference:-  
CAB 63 / 160

38



137

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Reference:- CAB 63 / 160

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~~38~~ 39



Thursday, April 25th.  
(CONT'D.)

in France. If it were not possible to take Trondhjem in this way we should eventually have to withdraw from southern Norway.

When they met again at 9 p.m. it was still not clear if the Germans had established direct communication between Oslo and Trondhjem. They discussed fully the desirability and practicability of the "hammer" operation and decided that plans should be prepared for it ~~at the~~ <sup>for</sup> discussion the next day. After the meeting the First Lord of the Admiralty informed them that the Prime Minister had authorized them to give ~~them~~ the necessary orders for ~~the~~ preparation in connection with this operation including the despatch of a warning message to the Commander-in-Chief, B.E.F.

Friday, April 26th.

The morning report stated that there had been heavy bombing on the communications ~~from~~ <sup>to</sup> Andalsnes ~~&~~ front and on the base itself where two anti-submarine trawlers had been sunk. Troops had disembarked at Molde. Aircraft from the Ark Royal had attacked Trondhjem and 18 Gladiators had landed at <sup>on</sup> the aerodrome 35 miles south east of Andalsnes.

The Germans were reported to have reached Tonset in the eastern valley but Morgan's Brigade was ~~already~~ <sup>holding</sup> south of Otta. The Chiefs of Staff meeting at 9 a.m. considered <sup>the</sup> proposed "hammer" operation against Trondhjem and concluded that it was at best a hazardous operation and <sup>that</sup> if we succeeded in capturing Trondhjem we could not afford adequate anti-aircraft protection. The diversion of German

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REFERENCE  
CAB 63 / 160

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139

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**CAB 63 / 160**



140

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REFERENCE:-  
CAB 63 / 160

Saturday, 27th April.

The morning report stated that Andalances had been bombed and severely damaged. Morgan's Brigade had been reduced to 400 men. One battalion of the 15th Brigade was in Kuan and another at Dombass.







142

Saturday, April 27th.  
(CONT'D.)

The Supreme War Council met in London at 2.30 p.m., the British representatives being the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Service Ministers. They explained the situation in Norway on the same lines as had been put to General Gamelin on the previous evening. As a further item of news the last remaining jetty at Andalsnes had now been badly damaged. They expressed the hope that even when our forces were evacuated some means would be found of continuing the fight in Southern Sweden. We had to face the fact that even if we occupied Narvik we should not necessarily secure control of the iron ore mines.

M. Reynaud appreciated the need for abandoning operations in the Trondhjem region previously contemplated, but urged that every effort should be made if possible to postpone evacuation until after the capture of Narvik, and if possible to place forces north of Namsos and in the mountains to the south of Trondhjem. There was some discussion of the possibility of destroying the iron ore mines and offering Sweden compensation for them.

It was agreed that the effort to capture Trondhjem must be abandoned, that the force based on Andalsnes might have to be withdrawn as a matter of urgent necessity but that this should not be done before it was absolutely necessary, that the Allied Staffs should study, on the basis of General Gamelin's suggestions, the gradual withdrawal northward of the forces now based on Namsos, with a view to delaying the further advance of the Germans from Trondhjem, and that the capture of Narvik remained a most important military objective.

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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143  
Saturday, April 27th.  
(CONT'D.)

[The Council also discussed at the same meeting the possibility of Italian aggression in the Mediterranean.]

The Military Co-ordination Committee met at 6.0 p.m. with the Prime Minister in the chair. They were informed of the latest messages from General Paget to the effect that, unless the enemy's air superiority could be overcome, we must evacuate quickly. He thought that we could hold on for about four days but a German column was said to be making its way from the eastern valley and threatening to turn his left flank. Heavy losses had been inflicted on the German columns encountered so far. They approved instructions to Lieut.-General Massy for the evacuation of the British and French troops from Central Norway. This would probably be carried out about May 1st or 2nd. The Prime Minister said that he would have preferred to have held on to the Trondhjem area a little longer but in the light of the latest information he thought it best that we should withdraw as proposed. Special companies were being organised to carry out guerrilla operations based on naval co-operation.

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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Ex 532.8

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*K. S. S. S.*

The Hon. C. Hankey,  
Treasury Chambers,  
Whitehall, S.W.1.

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**CAB 63 / 160**

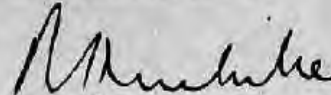


## MINUTE SHEET.

Air Ministry File No.

S.6.

Will you please see the attached draft of a speech which Lord Hankey is going to make in the House of Lords tomorrow afternoon. Will you be good enough to arrange for the speech to be vetted as a matter of urgency and for Lord Hankey to be informed of any observations we may have by this evening.



7.5.40.

P.S. to C.A.S.

2.

P.S. to C.A.S.

The attached has been discussed with D. of Plans, and we have the following comments.

2. There is little in the draft to which exception can be taken on security grounds. There are, however, a number of points on which possible criticisms can be foreseen, as follows:-

(A), page 3: The argument is that, although we were aware of the German concentrations in the Baltic ports, there was no means of deciding which country aggression was likely to be directed against. In reply, it might be pointed out that in the case of four, and possibly five, of the countries mentioned, we should have had to send an expeditionary force, and the exact destination of the force was not a matter of critical importance.

(B), page 4: The words "for action in Scandinavia" are perhaps at variance with the passage of the speech at (A) above.

(C), page 5: "At very short notice". The transports sailed in fact 3 days after the Germans had actually landed in Norway. It is possible to argue that this is not "at very short notice".

(D), page 5: "We hoped ..... to forestall the Germans at the ports of Western Norway and to obtain possession of the available aerodromes." This may be contrasted with the statement on page 21 of the draft to the effect that we had no topical knowledge as to what lands or frozen lakes were available and usable as aerodromes at this season.

/(E).....

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CAB 63 / 160

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Air Ministry File No.

Amesbury

P.S. to C.A.S.

P.S. to C.A.S.

(D), page 6: "We hoped ..... to forestall the Germans at the ports of Western Norway and to obtain possession of the available aerodromes." This may be contrasted with the statement on page 21 of the draft to the effect that we had no topical knowledge as to what lands or frozen lakes were available and usable as aerodromes at this season.

/ (E) . . . .

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146 ✓

(E), page 5: Suggest delete "about".

✓

(F), page 7: It may be questioned whether the violation of neutrality involved by entering Norwegian territorial waters in search of shipping would have been any more "gross" than the laying of mines.

0

(G), page 8: If we did appreciate the treachery involved in the invasion of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, why did we not foresee the possibility of treachery being used in the case of Norway?

✓

(H), page 10: Is a misprint.

✓

(I), page 11: There is perhaps a discrepancy between the suggestion "military forces had been kept in readiness .... to occupy the Norwegian Western ports ..... the moment Germany violated Norwegian territory", and the statement in the next sentence that the forces were despatched 3 days after the German landing.

(J), page 11: States the importance of having troops available to follow up a naval success at Narvik.

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(K), page 10: Makes it clear that the forces at Narvik on the 13th April had a complete success.

(L), page 12: Talks of the forces being immediately diverted from Narvik because they were not needed there.

(M), page 13: D.of Plans remarks that it was the problem of the attack on Narvik which the Staffs were instructed to work out at this stage.

0

(N), page 15: The possible criticism is that while destruction of the German capital ships was not a vital aim, that of achieving a successful coup de main against Trondhjem would have been.

✓

(O), page 20: It may be doubted whether the fact that our operations compelled the enemy to send larger air forces to Norway than they contemplated is a strong point for the speech.

✓

(P), page 21: The squadron claim to have shot down 6, and probably to have shot down 8 *more*

(Q), page 21: The only casualties to personnel were 2 injured.

/(R)....

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CAB 63 / 160



2 (contd)

?  
✓  
✓  
(R), page 22: Depends on one naval report. Suggest omit.

(S), page 24, and (T), page 25: It may be doubted whether it is wise to refer to the operations in Central Norway as a diversion, more particularly in view of the effect of such a statement on Norwegian opinion.

(U), page 26: "Away from the decisive theatre". As operations were not in progress elsewhere, it may be questioned how much importance should be attached to the fact that German air, and other, forces were diverted to Norway.

S.E.  
7/5/40

h. v. d. m.

1.1 8.1.41.  
You will wish to let  
Cnd Hanky have these comments.  
7/5  
R. M. S. H. L.  
P.S. to A.D.

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CAB 63 / 160



MY LORDS

This afternoon we have met to pass in review the recent operations in Norway.

I propose to devote myself mainly to the campaign in Norway, leaving my noble friend, the Foreign Secretary, to reply to any wider issues that may be raised in the course of the Debate. Before I deal with the principal criticisms that have been made here and elsewhere, there are two preliminary points that I should like to make.

### PRELIMINARY POINTS.

The first is that the decisions of those responsible ought to be judged in the light of the information in their possession and the situation that existed at the time and not of subsequent events.

The second is that there are a number of matters bearing on these events which cannot be mentioned without detriment to the public interest, and I am confident that Your Lordships

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**CAB 63 / 160**

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will not expect me to give any information that might be useful to the enemy, who will naturally watch these debates with the utmost vigilance. They will be especially anxious to know the reasons why we did or did not adopt a particular course at a particular moment.

DISPERSAL OF  
FINLAND  
EXPEDITION.

Coming to the criticisms the first point which presents itself is as to the reasons for the dispersal of the forces which had been assembled for use in Finland and for possible assistance to Norway and Sweden in the event of their being threatened as a consequence of their agreeing to allow the passage of Allied troops.

It has been asked as to whether this dispersal was justified in view of the information we had received as to the accumulation of troops and transports in Baltic ports, and the reports of their practising embarkation and disembarkation.

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In all the circumstances the Government did not feel justified in retaining inactive the whole of these forces, and in immobilising shipping which was required for other purposes.

-3-

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**CAB 63 / 160**



THE DECISION TO  
LAY A MINE  
FIELD.

PLANS IN THE EVENT  
OF AN ADVERSE  
GERMAN REACTION.

151

By the beginning of April however, a new factor entered into the situation with our decision to lay mine fields in order to put an end to the abuse of Norwegian territorial waters by ships carrying iron ore and other contraband to Germany.

It was realised that the laying of mines in territorial waters might lead to a sharp German reaction, and plans were drawn up for this contingency. It was decided to hold a military force in readiness to occupy Norwegian western ports at short notice in case of a German aggression against southern Norway. But no move from a British port was to take place until Germany had either violated Norwegian territorial integrity or shown unmistakeably her intention of doing so.

Early in April however, reports were received that German troops and shipping in Baltic ports were still in readiness for action in Scandinavia, and emergency arrangements for expediting the despatch of these expeditions

(B) X

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152

if an emergency should arise, and preparations were put in hand for further forces to be got ready to reinforce these expeditions if necessary.

The position therefore on April 8th when the mines were laid was that advance forces (with reinforcements in preparation behind them) were ready to sail at very short notice at the first sign of a German landing in Norway. With these forces it was hoped to forestall the Germans at the ports of western Norway and to obtain possession of the available aerodromes.

It was (about) as good a plan as could be devised without the acquiescence of Norway, a point to which I must now turn.

At the end of December, at the time of the Finnish affair, when Norway appeared to be in considerable danger of attack, we had approached the Norwegian Government as to the possibility of Allied assistance being given to her in the event of German attacks, but the Norwegian Government did not feel able, for reasons that

C. 3 days

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NORWEGIAN REFUSAL  
TO CONCERT PLANS.

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153

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-6-



154

'F' 11 7 10 mines

gross violation of neutrality, have entered Norwegian territorial waters to search shipping and discover what was going on.

Still less could we have landed troops in Norwegian ports without either first receiving an invitation, or there being a violation of Norwegian territory by the enemy.

All this enables me to answer the question as to why we were forestalled in the Norwegian ports.

The answer is that the enemy was bound by no corresponding scruples.

German history is studded with examples of treachery comparable with that which we have just witnessed. Tacitus describes how "specious pretences are employed to veil their designs". The late Mr. H.A.L. Fisher in his History of Europe aptly describes Frederick the Great's invasion of Silesia without a declaration of war in 1740 as "an act of the blackest treachery", and the story of the partitions of Poland as "one of the most shameful in the Annals

GERMAN TREACHERY,  
WHY WE WERE FORE-  
STALLED.

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5. Why not leave

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156

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157

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While these events were taking place in London the Renown was engaging <sup>the</sup> in Scharnhorst and another German cruiser successfully in extremely bad weather conditions not far from Narvik, but full reports of this action were not available until April the 11th. The two brilliant destroyer attacks on Narvik on April the 10th and 13th respectively, the latter supported by H.M.S. Warapite, accounted for the whole of the German naval forces in that region. The operations of the R.A.F. and Fleet Air Arm at Bergen on April the 10th had resulted in further German losses and the Admiral Scheer was hit by a British submarine on April the 11th. And we must not forget the contribution made by the Oslo forts and Norwegian Men of War towards the clearing up of the naval situation which was pretty well complete by April the 12th.

H X

Meanwhile the Air Force also had displayed immense vigour. As early as April the 7th it was air reconnaissance that revealed the presence of German armoured forces in the North Sea and R.A.F. bombers at once went out to attack them. From that moment onwards until the final evacuation the R.A.F. was almost continually engaged by night and by day, in unfavourable weather conditions and at extreme ranges, in bombing

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German aerodromes in Norway, Denmark and at Sylt with a view to reducing the activities of the German Air Force. It is known that they inflicted very heavy losses on the enemy. To this must be added the work of the Fighter patrols and long range fighters despatched to Norway, and the invaluable reconnaissance work of the Coastal Command.

I submit that no charge of lack of vigour can be sustained in respect of the Navy or the Air Force.

THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN.

It remains to consider whether sufficient vigour was displayed in respect of the military campaigns and to that I will now turn.

I have already mentioned that so far from preparation having been made military forces had been kept in readiness to cross the North Sea to occupy the Norwegian western ports the moment that we were invited, or that Germany violated Norwegian territory.

I {  
NARVIK FORCE  
STARTS.

X The first of these military forces was despatched to Narvik on April the 12th, within three days of the German landing.

The second naval attack was about to take place and it was obviously important to have troops available to take advantage of any opportunity that might offer to follow up a naval success. The first contingent was

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CAB 63 / 160

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159

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That brings us to the operations in Central Norway.

Before dealing with the conduct of the operations I ought perhaps to examine briefly the question of whether we were right to go into Central Norway at all.

Obviously it was an expedition involving great risks, more particularly in view of the fact that the Germans were already in possession of the only satisfactory ports and aerodromes in that part of the country.

At first our information as to Norwegian resistance was very vague but we were glad to learn on April the 11th that the Norwegian Government had given instructions for military co-operation with the Allies, and on the following day that the Norwegian forces were resisting on a line some 60 to 70 miles north of Oslo. They were, however, hard pressed. From April the 12th onwards, urgent appeals were being received from the

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CAB 63 / 160



160

Norwegian Government and High Command for help and more particularly for the re-capture of Trondhjem.

In the meantime we had been busily engaged on our preparations. At the very outset of the affair on April the 9th, the Staffs had been instructed to work jointly in the problem of an attack on Trondhjem.

The difficulties and dangers of that operation were great especially from the point of view of submarine and air attack, but in the light of the information we had at that time they did not appear insuperable. The Norwegians were resisting. The enemy was as yet not believed to be in great force. His communications were being heavily attacked by submarines, mines and by the Royal Air Force, which had also begun to subject his aerodromes to as heavy a hammering as the weather conditions permitted. In Norway also the terrain appeared to lend itself to large scale and effective demolitions by the Norwegians which seemed calculated gravely to hamper the enemy's advance.

The political advantages of action were so over-riding as to justify some risk.

In the case of Poland and Finland it had not been possible for the Allies to bring effective assistance because they were inaccessible.

M.  
no. Narvik

THE MILITARY  
POSITION.

THE POLITICAL  
ADVANTAGES  
OF ACTION.

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

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161

But Norway is on the sea - on the wrong side of the sea for military operations from our point of view it is true - but still not inaccessible. Were we to allow another small nation to collapse without making a real effort to strengthen her resistance, to delay the German advance or to facilitate the rescue and protection of the King and Government from the imminent fate that threatened them? Were we to remain deaf to the appeal for help that we were receiving from the Norwegian Government and Army? That was our problem.

#### THE DECISION.

The Allies had no hesitation. They realised that great risks were involved, but they felt that these risks must be run. I should doubt if many of Your Lordships would in all the circumstances have taken a different decision.

#### A POSSIBLE NAVAL ATTACK.

Coming back to the question of vigour the next point that arises is as to whether we adopted the right plan of attack.

The Noble Lord opposite has pressed the view that we ought to have made a direct attack on Trondhjem by sea.

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Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**

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162

✓ If that could have been done by a coup-de-main immediately after the German occupation, and if the entry of the Fleet could have been followed at once by the landing of troops, there might have been a good deal to be said for it.

N. X X

But our larger ships at that time were quite properly engaged in seeking out the enemy's capital ships.

By the time a naval bombardment could have been undertaken, with a landing force in support (and some days would have been necessary for the indispensable preparations) the Germans would have been in Trondhjem for several days.

There are, of course, two schools of thought about naval attacks on land fortifications.

One school holds that, given the great range of modern guns, this is a legitimate operation of war.

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163

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160



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THE LANDING  
PLACES.

The alternative was to land elsewhere in the neighbourhood of Trondhjem, and the places selected were Namsos to the North, where the disembarkation took place on the night of April 16th/17th, and Andalsnes to the South, where the first troops were landed on the night of April 17th/18th.

As I have so much ground to cover I will not attempt to describe the military operations, accounts of which have already been made public so far as information is as yet available.

THE USE OF  
TERRITORIALS.

Perhaps, however, I ought to refer to one point on which there has been some criticism, namely, as to why Territorial troops were sent into the fighting line. The original intention had been to use the Territorials for seizure of the bases at Namsos and Andalsnes.

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165

After their arrival, however, it became clear that British troops were urgently needed to support the Norwegians in the front line, and there was no alternative but to use the only troops that were immediately available. In each case they were rapidly backed by regular troops, either French or British.

#### AIR INFERIORITY.

On the fighting fronts, on their lines of communications, and at the base ports, however, our forces both north and south of Trondhjem found themselves handicapped by the lack of air protection.

At this point, therefore, I will answer the question as to how it came about that a fully organised anti-aircraft defence was not installed at these ports from the outset.

To begin with, I must remind your Lordships that speed was the essence of the operation.

If we were to arrive in time to keep the Norwegian forces in the field; if we were to join them in an attempt to re-capture Trondhjem

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160



166

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REFERENCE

CAB 63 / 160

-19-



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CAB 63 / 160



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Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**



169

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

CAB 63 / 160

**160**



170

-25-

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Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**



My Lords, I would deprecate too tragic a view of these events.

For Norway it is a tragedy, but we are determined that no effort shall be wanting on our part to recover for her her full independence, and no one will under-estimate the damaging effect on neutrals.

But, having said this I would add that for the Allies the gravity of the recent set-back can easily be exaggerated. It is not even remotely to be compared to, say, the Retreat from Mons, the evacuation of the Gallipoli Peninsula, or the German attack which began on the 21st March, 1918.

The military operation, indeed, savoured rather of a reconnaissance in force, and it is in that light, and as a diversion rather than as a major operation, that it must be judged.

Viewed as a diversion the results produced were considerable.

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Reference:-  
**CAB 63 / 160**



171

The Germans were drawn out of their central and strongly defended position on the continent of Europe, and the result was that their Fleet was reduced to about half its original strength, great numbers of transports were sunk and heavy air losses were sustained.

The military operations bear a certain resemblance to Sir John Moore's campaign in Spain in the winter of 1808-9.

Moore was sent to try and help the Spanish people to resist Napoleon's army of 250,000 men which was rampaging through the country. Even with Moore's help the Spaniards could not stand up to Napoleon's veterans. He had to retreat, but his small force of 25,000 men drew from 60,000 to 100,000 French troops down to Galicia and away from the decisive point.

In the same way our diversion in Norway though considerably smaller than Moore's has

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Reference: CAB 63 / 160

" 'Honourable retreats', says Lord Bacon, 'are no ways inferior to brave charges, as having less of fortune, more of discipline, and as much of valour'. That is an honourable retreat in which the retiring general loses no trophies in fight, sustains every charge without being broken, and finally, after a severe action, re-embarks his army in the face of a superior enemy without being seriously molested."

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173  
9th May, 1940.

Thank you so very much for your two letters of Sunday and Tuesday last.

Perhaps in a way it is as well that you did not come up because the Debate was rather a scrum and an enormous number of people wanted to speak and a lot of them got crowded out. We had two Government speakers. I spoke on Norway early in the Debate and Halifax, on the general situation, wound up. When I read the Government statement in the previous week I had had the novel and uncomfortable experience of a very chilly not to say glacial reception. Yesterday I began to speak in rather a similar atmosphere. "The Fifth Column" (Salisbury, Boom Trenchard, Swinton, Londonderry and Co.) were there in great force and looked menacing. However, I honestly believe that I got away with it almost completely and Halifax finished the success.

In the Commons the Government had a very bad time indeed, and I should not be at all surprised if I followed  
you

Admiral of the Fleet the Rt. Hon. Lord Chatfield,  
G.C.B., O.M., K.C.M.G., C.V.O.  
Lodge Hill Hotel,  
Watersfield, Pulborough, Sussex.

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174  
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